

HIS LIFE
AND
LAST APPEARANCE



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HIS FIRST AND LAST APPEARANCE

BY FRANCIS J. FINN, S. J.

Author of "The Best Foot Forward," "That Football Game,"
"Tom Playfair," Etc.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CHARLES C. SVENDSEN

NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO
BENZIGER BROTHERS

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HIS FIRST AND LAST APPEARANCE.

CHAPTER I.

SHOWING HOW PHILIP LACHANCE
SINGS A SONG, HOW HE IS RE-
WARDED, AND HOW POLICEMAN
SPENCER IS TROUBLED BY THE
PRESENCE ON HIS BEAT OF A
VERY SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER.



IT ought to have been a gloomy day, but it was not. Although the hands of the City Hall clock announced to the people of Milwaukee that it was only three in the afternoon, the streets were shrouded in a premature twilight. The sky above was of a dull, dead, slate-color, and the wind below was sobbing when it ceased to howl. It was in a cutting humor, and its wings were of ice. It was a bitter, biting, clamorous northeaster, and when it nipped noses it left them red and their owners gasping. So, I repeat, it ought to have been a gloomy day. However, there are other circumstances besides the weather to be taken into account; and, moreover, the weather on this occasion had its redeeming fea-

tures. After all, one does not expect sunny skies and long-drawn afternoons and balmy airs in mid-December. Then it was snowing—snowing in a quiet, steady, deliberate manner. The large, fluffy flakes came down thickly, leisurely; and snow in December, as every boy and girl will admit, is a glorious thing. It gives promise of merry sleighing to the joyous jingling of many bells, and of strong forts and of jolly snow-ball fights; best of all, when it comes in mid-December—it was now the seventeenth of that wintry month—it whispers to the hearts of the young that gladdest of news, “Christmas is coming!”

But if the snow and the bitter wind left any doubt as to the near advent of that joyous day, there were signs galore, on this particular afternoon, which established it to a certainty. Rosy-cheeked matrons—they were all rosy-cheeked in this bracing weather—were pushing busily along the street, carrying bundles which hinted of toys, and pretty gifts and Christmas trees. They wore an air at once joyous and mysterious—joyous because they were shopping for the dear little ones at home; mysterious, because, doing good by stealth, they feared the possibility of detection. And the shops—how gay they were with thronging customers and smiling, busy clerks and salesmen! How pretty, with bunches of holly and ivy leaves and mistletoe! Express wagons were in much evidence; evergreen trees, of many varieties, cut and trimmed for their festive appearance in the parlors of happy homes, were to be found at almost every corner, and errand boys were as plentiful as blackberries in late summer.

The shops on Milwaukee Street, just north of the

post-office, were, of course, in their very best holiday attire. Of them all, none was brighter, none more inviting, none prettier, none more thronged than Conroy's, the proprietor of which, as everybody knows, or ought to know, is the fashionable caterer of Milwaukee.

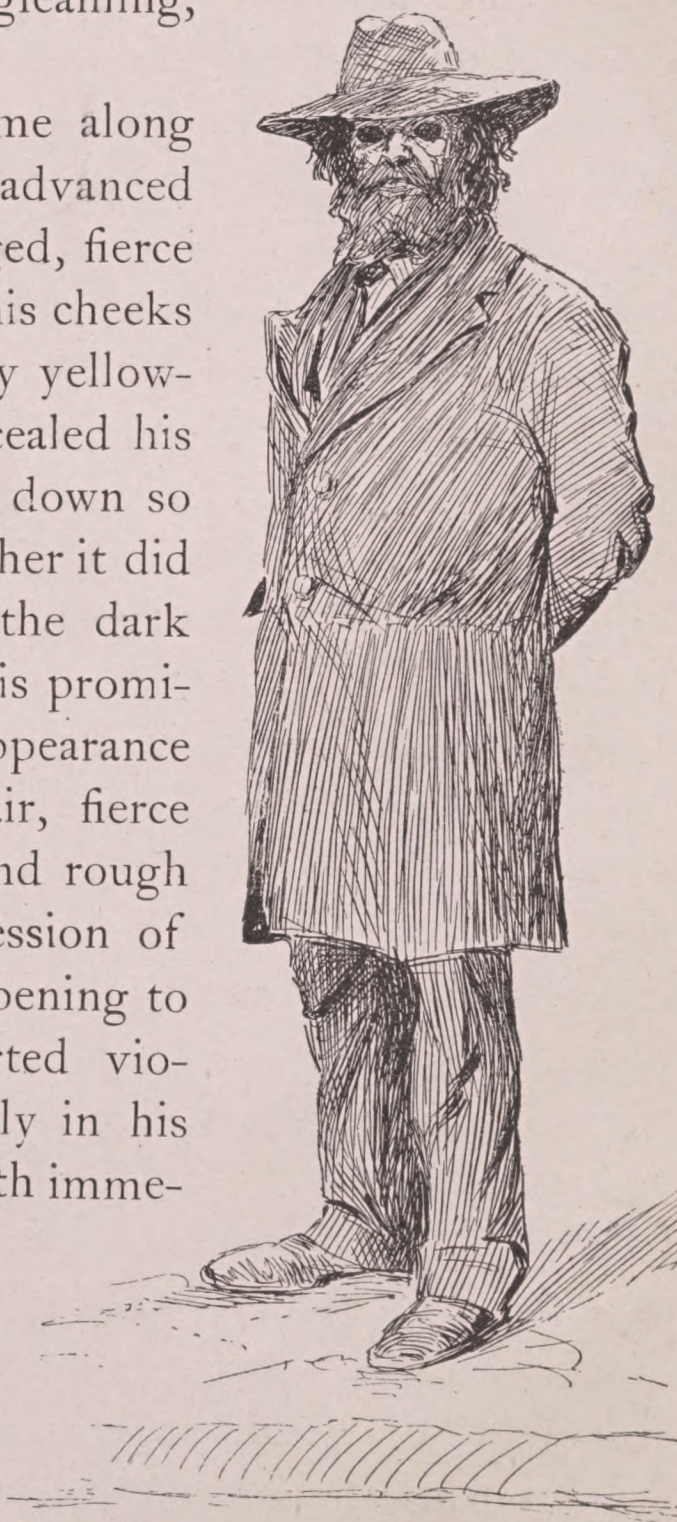
In front of this most inviting confectionery, but with his back to it, hopped and skipped a lad of about ten years of age. His little nose was red, and his thin lips looked pinched and blue. His eyes were large, dark, and innocent. They were eyes that looked out into the world as though they expected to find a new friend in every man, woman, and child upon whom they alighted. An imaginative stranger meeting their gaze would read in them the pretty question, "Aren't you a friend of mine?" I am sorry to say that this little boy did not seem to be at all comfortable, as he gazed with absorbing attention—though he continued his hopping and skipping movement—upon the dazzling cuff-buttons, rings, and other articles of jewelry, exhibited by a street vender to a public which refused to be interested. The splendor of this array was splendor without heat; and the boy was evidently cold. His knickerbockers were thin and frayed; his jacket, buttoned close about him, was, in view of the weather, of a light texture, and overcoat he had none. His hands were deep in his pockets, so deep that he was bent forward, as though he were making a back for the game of leap-frog. Having at last satisfied himself with his examination of the wares and stared artlessly at the vender, surveying him, that is, with an extensive view, from top to toe, he addressed himself to chasing large, lingering flakes and catching them in his open mouth.

In his not over-successful endeavors he bumped into several people, and, receiving words from two or three of them which were not exactly encouraging, he discontinued the amusement and turned his face toward Conroy's show-cases, large, magnificent, gleaming, resplendent.

As he turned, there came along the street a man apparently advanced in years. He wore a ragged, fierce beard, long and unkempt; his cheeks were hollow and of a slightly yellowish color; a slouch hat concealed his forehead, the brim hanging down so low that one wondered whether it did not imperil the safety of the dark spectacles which bestrode his prominent nose. His whole appearance—shaggy clothes, long hair, fierce mustache, suspicious hat, and rough beard—gave one the impression of an anarchist. His eyes happening to fall upon the boy, he started violently, and, ceasing suddenly in his walk, he sent a colliding youth immediately behind him into the gutter.

"Look what yer a-do-in', will yer?" snarled the injured lad.

But the suspicious-



"He looked like an anarchist."

looking man gave no heed to this remonstrance ; his gaze was riveted on the solitary little boy, who, now bent lower than ever, was staring into one of Conroy's show-cases.

Pushing back his slouch hat and readjusting his glasses with a single quick motion of the hand, the man stood stock still for fully half a minute ; then suddenly, and with the air of a burglar, he started for the other side of the street, where, finding a telegraph pole convenient to his use, he stationed himself behind it, and from this coign of vantage continued to stare at the unconscious child, as though he were the only little boy on the face of the round globe.

The object of these attentions was meanwhile enjoying a Barmecide feast. No wonder his eyes grew large ; no wonder he forgot everything, save the tempting array under his gaze. There were oranges there—great pyramids, glorious, golden—which would make the driest mouth water. And then that platter of cream puffs ! It was quite wicked to put such nice things where hungry little people could only look at them. Cream puffs were not made to be looked at, but to be devoured. And the candies—some of them done up so cunningly in paper that they looked like little fairies bundled up for a winter outing—the candies were of all the colors of the rainbow. To add to their splendor, there was a bewildering array of pretty boxes and many tasseled cornucopias, and toy animals—elephants and cows and camels—whose interiors were filled with every variety of sweets and dainties. The frequent opening of the door, as men and women passed in and out, brought to his nostrils a savory odor, and each whiff from within

that place of delight made him feel fainter, hollower. In spite of his sunny disposition, the boy began to think that the world was just a little out of joint.

"It's a wonder," he soliloquized, as with changing foot he kicked his own legs and doubled himself up in admiration of the pretty things, so near and yet so far—"it's a wonder that some bad man doesn't come along and break in this window. I know I should, if I was bad." And thus speaking, he pressed his tiny nose against the glass, and fell into a contemplation which seemed to absorb his entire being.

The elderly man across the street, meanwhile, had removed his hat and glasses. The removal of the hat, revealing a head of bushy hair, added to his anarchistical appearance. The policeman on the beat, James Spencer, began to be interested. No one, he reflected, went about with a head of hair like that but an anarchist or a football player. Now, it was plain that he of the bushy hair was not a hero of the gridiron! and, indeed, with his glasses removed, he blinked like an owl, and looked utterly helpless, and not at all like one who could buck his way through the line. And so he continued to blink, shutting now one eye, now the other, as though he were trying to get every possible point of view of the lad at the show-case window.

The policeman grew interested. No such suspicious character had set foot upon his beat for many a day.

Meanwhile the child continued his ecstasy and the process of flattening his nose. Raising his eyes presently, his attention was caught by the decorations in the upper part of the show-case—the bright red berries of the holly,



“ Philip began to feel that the world was out of joint.”

the dark green of the ivy, the olive-green laurel, the masses of mistletoe and the other holiday decorations. All these things brought Christmas so near that, forgetting his hunger, losing sight of the place and the time, yet still mechanically kicking an alternate heel against an alternate leg, he began humming to himself the song of Noël.

As the ecstasy grew deeper, richer, intenser, the music waxed clearer, sweeter, fuller.

"Ah!" muttered the man across the way, and forthwith he clapped on his hat, adjusted his spectacles to his nose, and ceased to blink, while his face lighted up with a great wonder and a great delight.

"O holy night! the stars are brightly shining,"

the boy had begun, in tones as sweet as they were low.

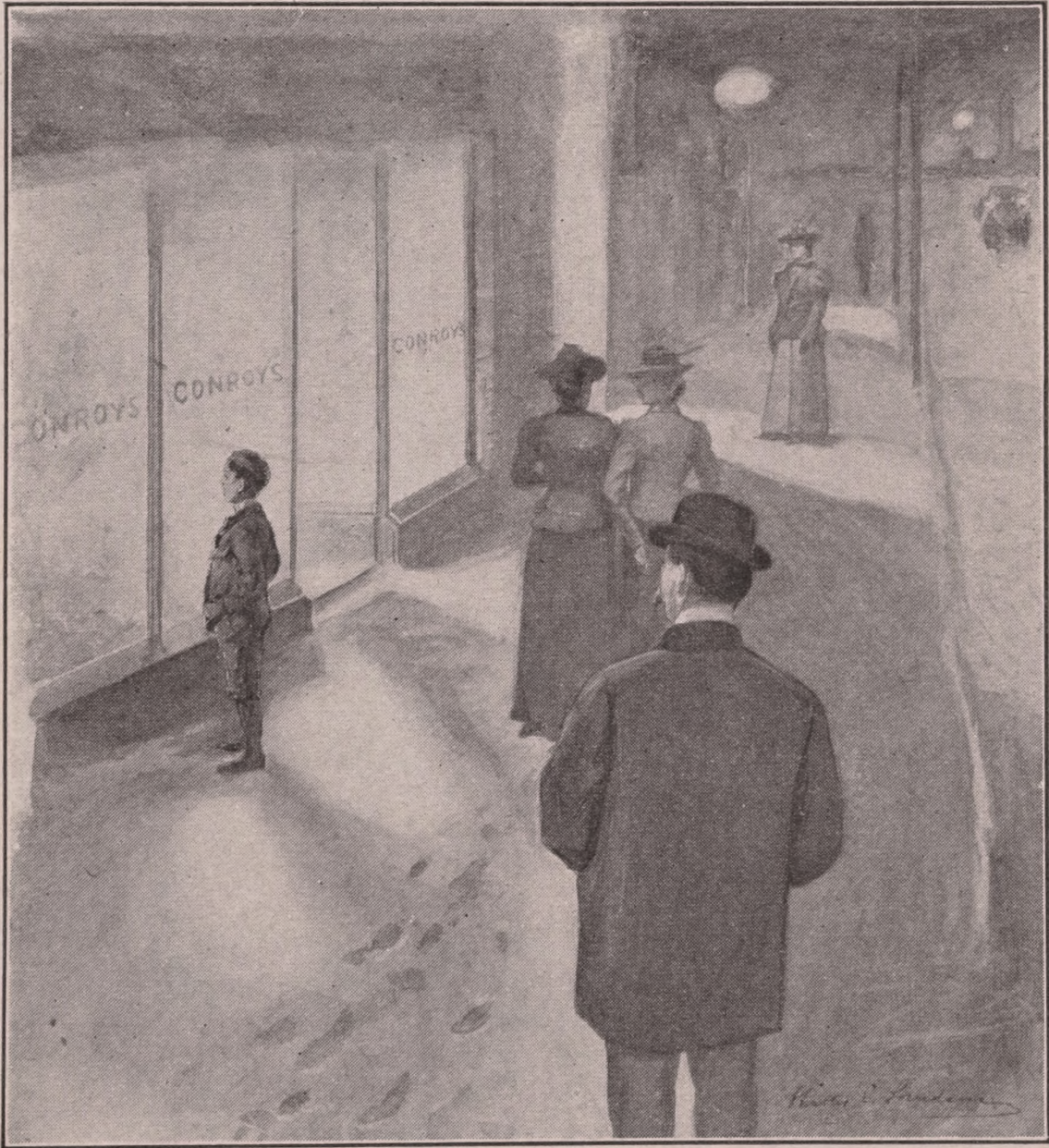
A gentleman, somewhat portly and well-to-do in appearance, who happened to be passing just then, caught the sweet strains, and turning his head, glanced at the boy, first carelessly, then with sudden interest. He paused, his gaze fixed fully upon the little heel-kicker, who for the sake of the melody had risen to a more erect position and withdrawn his nose from contact with the pane. As the gentleman gazed, his brows went up in surprise, and he took hold of the ends of his brown mustache with either hand and tugged at them nervously, varying the act occasionally by twisting them between his finger and thumb.

"It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth,"

continued the lad, his voice growing stronger, lovelier, sweeter with each note. The gentleman gave a gasp of

astonishment. Strains like these, he thought, belonged to paradise.

So interested was the policeman in watching with growing suspicion every movement and gesture of the strange



“‘O holy night! the stars are brightly shining,’ sang Philip.”

old man, that these delicious sounds fell upon his ears unheeded. The unwitting object of his attentions, now beaming with a benevolence quite in contradiction with the

general ferocity of his appearance, produced from an inner pocket a small steel bifurcated instrument, and gazed at it with a smiling mouth and a frowning brow.

This was too much for Officer Spencer; he had never seen a tuning-fork before. For aught he knew, it might be some new form of explosive.

“Look here,” he said, advancing, “get!”

“How?” cried the man, ceasing to smile, and, with a start, turning ghastly pale under the eye of the official.

“I know you,” said the policeman, at a venture, “and if I see you around here again, I’ll run you in. There, now; clear out!”

The man, who was trembling perceptibly, threw out both hands in a rude, deprecating gesture, and casting one lingering, longing look upon the boy, hurried away towards the post-office, where, sheltering himself behind a projection of the building, he bobbed in and out alternately, like a Jack-in-the-box, bobbing out when the policeman’s back was turned, bobbing in so soon as Spencer faced in his direction.

“Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till He appeared, sweet Babe, upon our earth.”

The boy’s voice took on strength with every word; there was a tenderness in its full tones, the hint of a sob, which was inexpressibly touching. The gentleman discovered two big tears starting from his eyes, and, in consequence, stopped twirling at his mustache. Three ladies who were about to enter the caterer’s paused and gazed, all of them with raised brows, one of them with open mouth.

“A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices;
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.”

Other men and women happening to be passing by paused to listen; surely since Solomon Juneau, the pioneer of Milwaukee, came thither to pass his best years among a savage race, surely sounds so sweet, so thrilling, had never floated away upon the breezes from the lake. A girl of about sixteen, a pupil of the Holy Angels' Academy, joined the group. Her face kindled with pleasure, and, as she looked at the thinly clad child, softened with pity. Almost instinctively she opened her purse. There was just one dollar in it. She took it out without the least hesitation, and, as the singing proceeded, quietly edged her way to the boy's side, and, so deftly that no one noticed her action, slipped the coin into the pocket of his jacket. Her home was over a mile and a half away, on the West Side, but when she left the group, presently, she walked the entire distance. You may be sure, though, she did not suffer from cold or fatigue. Her gentle heart was much too warm for that.

The boy, unconscious of the crowd that was steadily growing, now broke into the most beautiful part of that most beautiful song:

“Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices”—

“An angel's voice, rather,” whispered one lady to another. “That boy's voice does not belong to this earth.”

“Noël! Noël! O night when Christ was born!”

The crowd, cold though it was, stood transfixed. The

eyes of some were wet with tears; the eyes of others were gazing into the far, far away, as though the night divine, with its precious charge, its God Incarnate, lay before their inspired vision.

“Noël! Noël! O night, O night divine!”

The clear, young, fresh, untainted soprano voice rose and fell, swelled and quivered, then died away on the last note, like the passing of an angel, bright and glorious, from our ken into the regions where sight cannot follow.

The song was over. Some of the listeners rubbed their eyes as though they had awakened from a dream of heaven. Several sighed softly. One sob broke the spell. The boy hearing it, turned, and on seeing the crowd, flushed scarlet. He showed that he wished to escape, and the kindly men and women, willingly making room for him, departed upon their respective avocations. They had tasted deep of Christmas, and were silent.

“Hold on, my little boy!” The words came from the portly gentleman, who was again tugging, but with the fingers of one hand only, at his mustache. The other held his handkerchief.

The boy, who was panting and quivering from shame and alarm, gazed into the stranger’s face, and at once confidence returned. Indeed, it was a kind face, the face of one who had tasted sorrow, and been chastened thereby. The features were regular, and the expression at once serious and sympathetic.

“How do you do, sir?” said the boy, holding out his hand.

"My boy, tell me your name, please. Your face is quite familiar to me, and I'm sure I've seen you before," he said, as he shook the proffered hand.

"My name is Philip, sir -- Philip Lachance—and I come from New York."

Philip, like most New York boys, had a delicacy about pronouncing the letter "r." He said "soi" for sir, and "shoit" for short, and "New Yoik" for New York; and all these variations from the franker Western utterance sounded very prettily in his mouth.

"Ah!" said the gentleman, looking a trifle disconcerted. "Perhaps I am mistaken; but I was sure I had seen you before. How long have you been in the city?"

"Just three days, sir."

"Only three days? Then I was mistaken." And the man gazed earnestly and with a puzzled look upon the frank, chubby, upturned face.

"Were you ever in New York, sir?" As Philip spoke, he gave his left calf a vigorous kick. The man noticed it.

"Aren't you cold, my boy?" he said.

"Yes, sir; it's colder than I thought."

"What are you waiting for?"

"For my sister, Isobel. She's gone off to look for a job. She wanted me to come along, but I asked to wait here. I told her I wanted to look at the things in the windows. My! ain't they pretty, though?"

"Do you expect her back soon, Philip?"

"Not for half an hour, at least."

"Aren't you hungry?"

"Yes, sir," came the prompt reply.

"Do you like oysters?"

"I guess I do, sir."

"Well, suppose we take a little lunch together. My name is Mr. Dunne—Mr. John Dunne."

"How de do, Mr. Dunne," said Philip, gravely, but with much cordiality; and, clasping the strong, fine hand of Mr. Dunne, Philip, with artless cheerfulness, entered the caterer's.

As they seated themselves at a table in the farther end of the interior, another face took the place which Philip's had occupied but a few minutes before. The figure—slouch hat, shaggy clothes and fierce hair—seemed to darken the show-case. Its owner gazed long and earnestly at the boy who, seated afar, had his back turned. Suddenly the man whisked away from the window, and with head bent low, beat a rapid retreat towards the north. His flight was presently accounted for, when, stately, majestic, frowning, there passed the fine windows of plate-glass all the majesty of the law vested in the complacent person of Officer Spencer.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW PHILIP AND MR. DUNNE, BECOMING FRIENDS,
PASS AN AGREEABLE HALF HOUR, AND HOW MR. DUNNE
GETS AN IDEA, WHICH HE DISCRETELY KEEPS TO
HIMSELF.

WHILE Philip was eagerly awaiting the order for two bowls of oyster soup, Mr. Dunne again gazed earnestly into the little lad's face.

He found in it a strange fascination. It was a round, chubby face, beautiful in the soft, tender, vaguely defined curves of early years. The boy's complexion was pale and clear; so clear and pale that the few freckles upon his face stood out quite distinct. His mouth was rather large, and his throat round and full — the throat and mouth which so often go with a lovely voice. His eyes — large and dark, and confiding — were particularly beautiful. They were, indeed, like the mouth, out of proportion with the rest of the face, and, as is sometimes the case, gave the countenance that irregularity which is an added charm. His hair, soft and abundant, was quite black.

At present every feature was in a state of tranquillity, of perfect contentment. Not a line upon it spoke of trial or trouble. It is so easy for the young to shake off all unpleasant memories.

Philip noticed the earnest gaze of his new friend.

"Mr. Dunne," he said, calmly, "why are you staring at me so hard?"

"I'm trying to trace, you, Philip." And somewhat out of countenance, Mr. Dunne began to tug at his mustache.

"I noticed you doing that before," continued Philip, in the same calm voice.

"Doing what?"

"Catching hold of your mustache and pulling at it, as if you wanted to get it loose."

Now thoroughly disconcerted, Mr. Dunne put his hands into his pockets, smiling sheepishly the while. It occurred to him, then and there, that for the past ten years he had been in the habit of showing emotion by tugging at his mustache. The young gentleman, seated smilingly before him, was the first of all his acquaintances who had ever brought the fact home to him. At the thought of all the remarks that must have been made about this idiosyncrasy, he blushed furiously. Mr. Dunne was sensitive to a fault.

The young inquisitor noticed the red mantling in the other's face, and grew concerned at once. The look of placidity and perfect contentment gave place to an expression of anxiety. How tender the face grew at once! even in his embarrassment, Mr. Dunne noticed the rare change.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I'm afraid I have done what I've often been told not to do. Isobel has often told me not to ask questions of people. She says I have no tack."

"Well, Philip, I'm glad you asked that last question, all the same. It looks very stupid to see a man trying to pull away his mustache."

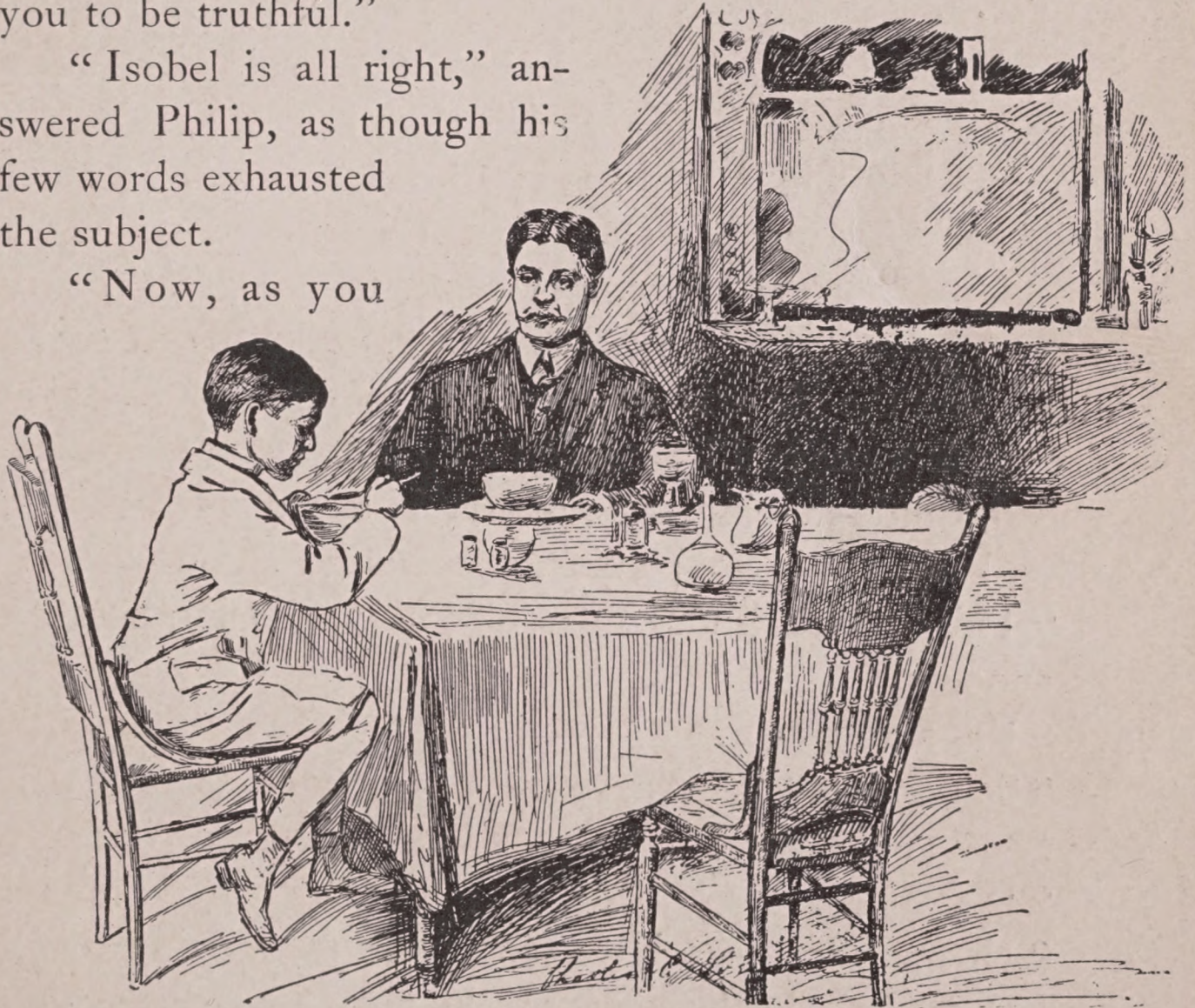
"Oh, I didn't mean that, sir!" cried Philip, throwing

out his hands, palms upward. "It doesn't look bad—that is, I mean, it doesn't look so *very* bad—at least, not in you, sir." And Philip went very red, as he realized that despite his explanations the situation was not improving.

"Thank you, my boy. Your sister, I see, has taught you to be truthful."

"Isobel is all right," answered Philip, as though his few words exhausted the subject.

"Now, as you



"This is nice, isn't it?" said Philip, pausing between the spoonfuls."

have asked me a few questions, Philip, I suppose I may take payment in kind."

"What's that, sir?" asked Philip, opening his eyes, and looking puzzled.

“Would you object to answering me a few questions in turn?”

“Oh, not a bit, sir. Here comes the soup,” he added, with a sudden access of cheerfulness. “I’m very fond of oysters; and its ever so long since we’ve had ’em.”

As the waitress put down the smoking bowls before them, Master Lachance gazed about the room with much animation. He liked it. It was very bright and pretty. Everything was in perfect taste; while laurel and ivy gave it the pretty Christmas touch, the bright faces all about him added to it the element of sweet human life. There were many women, some girls, and a few men seated at the tables; and the air was fragrant with perfume, and silvery with gentle tones and light laughter. The waitresses, neat-handed, gentle-moving, were gliding in and out among the tables, busy, yet bright; quick, yet noiseless.

“This *is* nice, isn’t it?” said Philip, pausing between the spoonfuls.

“I’m glad you like it.”

“So am I. When I grow up, I’m going to have oysters for every meal; and I’ll not let Isobel do a bit of work.”

“Indeed?”

“Not one bit—she intends to work for a living, and I don’t like it. I like crackers in my soup, don’t you? No, sir; when I begin to earn my living, I’ll make her dress in one of those things that have puffs on the sleeves, like balloons; and she’ll play lawn tennis and go visiting in a carriage with white horses, and, if she wants to, she shall ride a bicycle.”

“And what are you going to do?”

"Oh, I'll work. And sometimes when I haven't too much to do, I'll sing for Isobel, and play baseball."

"What sort of work do you intend doing?"

"I don't know, sir, yet. I used to want to be a motor-man; but that's more fun than anything else. I don't think I could have oysters for *all* the family on that kind of work. The conductor man gets lots of money from the passengers, and I used to think I'd like that. But Isobel has been telling me that he has to give it back to somebody else; and so I changed my mind again. I don't see much sense in collecting nickels all day and making change for people, and then handing it all over to somebody else. No, I don't think I should care for that. What do you think I ought to be, sir?"

"I'll have to know you better, and you'll have to get several years older before I begin to think of answering that question. So you came from New York?"

"Yes, sir, we got here three days ago."

"Who are 'we?'"

"Isobel and myself, and my other sister, Marie, and my little brother, Charlie. That's the whole family."

"Why, have you no father and mother?"

"Papa died over five years ago. I hardly remember him. Mamma died just about two weeks ago. Maybe it wasn't that long, but it seems like a year."

Here little Philip's eyes grew cloudy, and the touching quiver of his voice moved his listener very much.

"That's too bad," he said; "I'm sorry I asked you about it, Philip; it's a terrible thing to lose one's mother. Were you ever in Milwaukee before?"

"No, sir," answered Philip. "It's a nice place, isn't it?" he went on, brightening suddenly. "I think Grand Avenue is the nicest street in the world, especially up there from Ninth Street, all the way out. Isobel took me walking there; and it was great. They're all nice people there, ain't they?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I can see it on their faces. There are lots of nice people in the world."

"Where did you get that voice of yours, Philip?"

In answer to this question the boy broke into a little laugh. Several ladies turned toward him, involuntarily. It was indeed silvery and beautiful, and instinct with music. When Philip laughed, he drew back his head, and half-closed his eyes for very enjoyment.

"It's the best thing I've got," he said, bringing his head back to its usual position and opening his eyes full. "I guess I always had it. Papa was a musician and mamma used to sing most beautifully—nicer than the birds you hear out in the country when it's spring-time. Was you ever out in the country when it was spring?"

"Often."

"That's where I'm going to live when I grow up. You see——"

"Weren't you going to say something about your voice?" interrupted Mr. Dunne, gently.

"Oh, yes! Where was I? When I was seven, I was sitting on the curb one day in front of our place in New York, a humming, when a queer-looking man came along, and stopped to listen. After I got through he asked me

my name, and where I lived. I told him. Then he said his name was Professor Himmelstein, and that he thought my voice was just immense. The next thing I knew he went to my mother and asked her to let him train me for nothing. He had a great, big mustache that curled up at the corners; but he was a splendid teacher. He got hold of me three times a week for an hour."

"Did you like him?"

"You bet, I did. Sometimes, when I didn't sing well, he would pull his hair and dance 'round the room. You'd think he had a fit. But when I sang well he used to look so happy, and he'd kiss me and buy me oranges. One time, when I sang a song, he took me off and gave me an oyster supper, just like this. Oh, he was good!"

"How long did he teach you?"

"Till I left New York, sir."

"What have you come to Milwaukee for?"

"That's the funniest part, sir. I don't know, and neither does Isobel. It's a mystery, she says. If you wish, sir, I'll tell you all about it."

Mr. Dunne would fain have heard the story. He was deeply and unaccountably interested in the little boy facing him; but the word "mystery" had a sudden effect. It occurred to him at this juncture that to get the boy's life story might be taking an advantage of his youthful candor and innocence. If he could make the acquaintance of Isobel, he might inquire more freely of her. So he answered:

"I fear we shall have no time for the story this afternoon. Remember, you must meet your sister."

"That's so, I was nearly forgetting; and it's about time too."

"Before you go, my boy, give me your address."

"It's somewhere on Sycamore Street, near Tenth. I don't remember the exact number. We are boarding with Mrs. Downing. She's a nice woman, and likes boys."

Mr. Dunne having made a note of this, rose, and followed by Philip, went to the cashier's desk.

"Do you like candy, Philip?" he asked.

"Of course I do. So do my sisters, and my brother Charlie, especially Marie; she's a candy fiend."

"Put me up a couple of boxes of your best mixed candy, if you please," said Mr. Dunne to an attendant behind the counter.

When Philip, richer by these sweet gifts, reached the street, he was simply radiant.

"I should like to stay with you till your sister comes," Mr. Dunne observed, "but I fear I cannot afford to do so. I have several pressing engagements, and, possibly, may be called away from town on important business. So, Philip, we must separate."

"Good-by, then, Mr. Dunne," said the boy, throwing back his head and catching the hand offered him. The man shook hands warmly enough; the boy, with his face still raised, looked surprised and hurt. His face had a look of expectation.

"Good-by, Mr. Dunne," he repeated, still clinging to the hand.

Mr. Dunne gazed down and understood. Bending quickly, he kissed the little innocent, who at once broke

into a smile of perfect satisfaction; and then the big man retreated with a blush which would have done credit to a little school girl.

He had gone but a few steps when a light stroke fell upon his arm. He turned and perceived Philip, who at once backed away rapidly.

"Last tag!" laughed out Philip in explanation, and with that he was lost in the crowd.

At that moment Mr. Dunne, as the saying is, might have been brought down with a feather.

"By George!" he exclaimed under his breath, after some minutes of brooding. "By George, this is a red-letter day. It has given me an idea."

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE READER, GOING BACK TO THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER AND THE CITY OF NEW YORK, IS WITNESS TO A MUSIC LESSON THAT WAS NEVER FINISHED.

AS Mr. John Dunne's nice sense of delicacy had moved him not to take advantage of the artless boy's candor, he went his way accordingly, after parting from Philip, with his curiosity aroused but unsatisfied.

The reader of this veracious narrative, however, has privileges not accorded Mr. Dunne, and may without any vulgarity of curiosity go behind the scenes, and there learn the incidents which led to the presence of Master Philip Lachance in the City of Milwaukee. Hence we at once go back to New York and to the preceding month of November.

It is a chill, gloomy day. The sun has worn several hours, yet his rays, dimmed to some extent by the thick autumnal haze, are almost completely obscured in a tenement quarter of the great metropolis by an unhappy combination of smoke and dust.

On the third floor of a dilapidated-looking tenement-house, there is a fairly large room which looks down upon the narrow street below—a street not overcleanly by reason of the dirt and vegetable matter which are in offensive evidence, and not overquiet by reason of the raucous vocal hucksters and the shouting, screaming little street arabs.

In this room and in various positions are a woman, a

little girl and two boys. The larger boy we have already encountered: it is Philip Lachance of the wonderful soprano voice. The child of five is Charlie, his younger brother. Charlie is happily engaged with some toy blocks which have seen better days, and Philip standing over him is superintending with much vivacity the enrapt young architect.

• Marie, a pleasant-faced girl of about twelve, seated beside a table on which are spools of thread, needles, pins and the things that go to the making of a "housewife" is plying a busy needle with all the airs of an industrious matron. She is poorly, though neatly clad; only the eye of a woman or of a dry-goods salesman would take in at a glance that her clothes are old, poor, and of an inferior quality. An ordinary layman would be impressed with the taste, neatness and elegance of her appearance. Her little face, not quite so chubby as Philip's, is shining with grave contentment; she feels that she is helping mother.

Occasionally she raises her eyes from her work, and, changing for the moment her look of contentment for a graver air, looks reprovingly at her brothers. They are, after their kind, rather noisy.

"Now, Philip," she said presently, when that youngster had broken into a shout over the collapse of his brother's latest block building, "now, Philip, remember that mamma is not at all well. Be quiet, dear, like a good boy."

Philip becoming grave and silent at once, cast a look of troubled inquiry at his mother.

She was seated in a rocking-chair, her head bent down, and her temples pressed between her hands. The boy

recognized the attitude. His mother took that position whenever she was either ill or melancholy—and, I am sorry to say, she was in the one condition or the other many times in the course of a month.

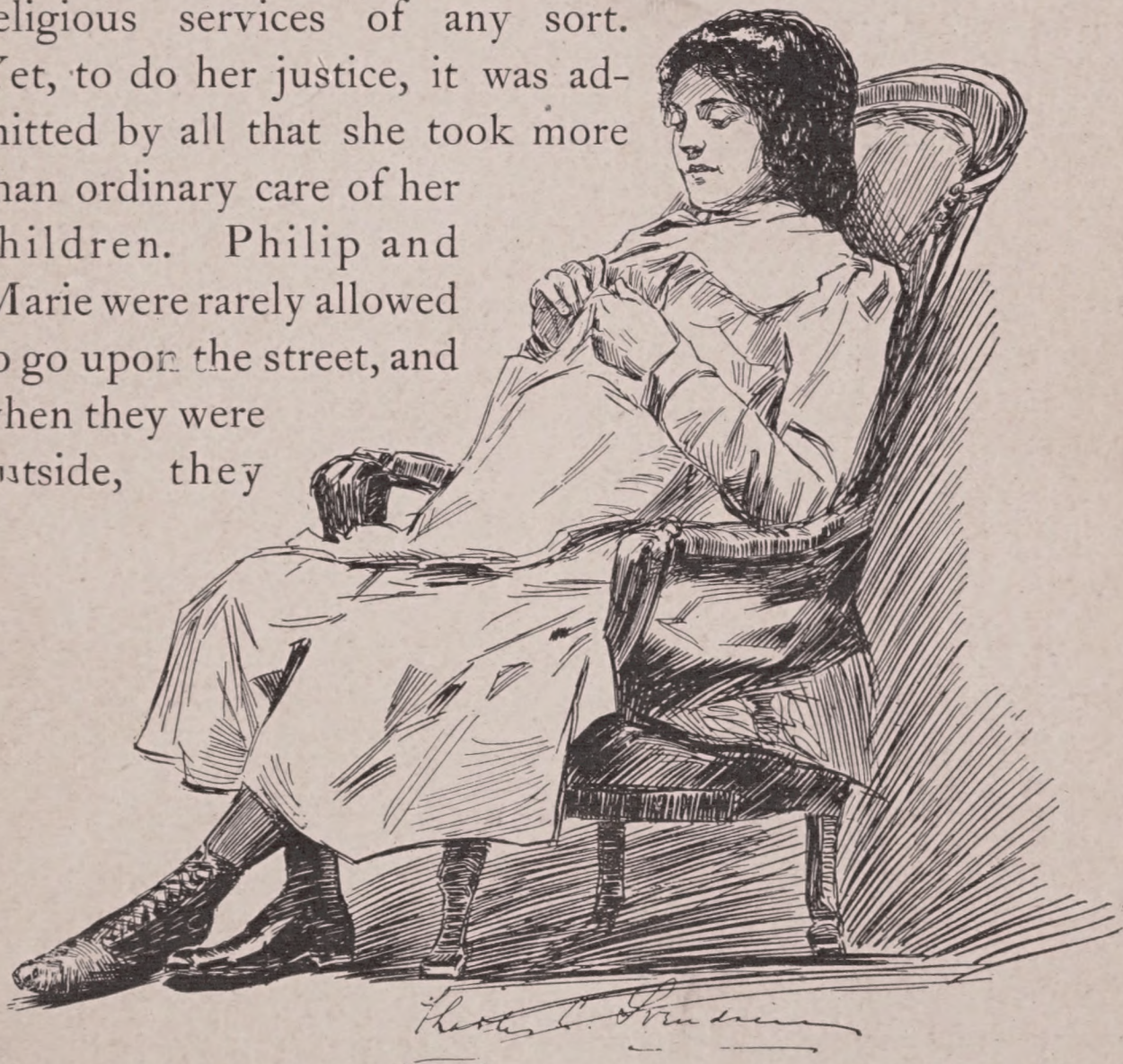
Mrs. Lachance, as Philip gazed, raised her head. She had a proud, strong, imperious face, a face that had once been singularly handsome, but upon which poverty and suffering and worry had written lines and wrinkles and pathos. Her eyes, deep and heavily fringed, told the story of a life that had known fellowship with bitterness and disappointment. She was a sad woman. Though she could not be more than forty, all the spring, all the elasticity, all the buoyancy of life had left that face in years long since past, and left it never to return.

Mrs. Lachance had ever been a puzzle to the other dwellers of the tenement. She was respected, she was feared; but she was not loved. Some held that she was haughty, and gave herself airs; others that she was soured and saddened by the dissipated life and the sudden death of her graceless husband—a Bohemian of artistic temperament, whose death, apparently, had been the most convenient thing in his record. But differ as people might on these points, all were agreed that Mrs. Lachance had a history, and that whatever it was, it would never be revealed from her lips. Again, all were agreed that she must be a fallen away Catholic.

Her children practiced their religion with scrupulous exactness. Philip and Marie attended the parochial school; and Isobel, just lately turned eighteen, was in the graduating class of St. Mary's Academy. On Sunday it was the

custom of Isobel to receive holy communion at an early Mass, and then, returning home, to take Philip and Marie to the later service. In the afternoon they attended Vespers and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. But no one in the neighborhood had ever seen the mother attend religious services of any sort.

Yet, to do her justice, it was admitted by all that she took more than ordinary care of her children. Philip and Marie were rarely allowed to go upon the street, and when they were outside, they



"Marie is plying a busy needle, with all the airs of an industrious matron."

were carefully shielded from bad company and evil influence. In consequence of this sheltered system (rendered necessary by the nature of their surroundings) Philip was very innocent, very unsuspecting; and, indeed, though he was ten

years of age, he had the pretty, innocent ways of a child of seven.

In looking at his mother, Philip noticed that the usual paleness of her face had given way to a strange flush. Something must be wrong, he reflected; and he eyed her more earnestly.

"Mamma," he said, running up to her and catching her hand, "aren't you sick? O! how hot your hand is."

Marie laid aside her sewing at these words, and placing herself beside the boy, put one arm around Philip's neck, and the other around the mother's.

"You do look ill," she said.

"I'll be better presently, my dears. It is a passing dizziness. Don't worry." She had raised her head to address them; but the effort was too much, and again letting her head fall, she buried her face in her hands.

Philip went back to his brother, satisfied. But Marie was not convinced. There was a change in the tone of her mother's voice which had not escaped her. Withdrawing her arm gently, she slipped quietly from the room.

Outside the room, she hurried down one flight of steps, and tapped softly at the door immediately to her right. In prompt answer to the knock there appeared a young woman, stout, rosy, smiling—the dainty lace cap, the wide-spreading apron and the starched dress, which crinkled as she moved, revealing the professional trained nurse.

"Oh, I thought it was the doctor; but you are every bit as welcome, my little dear," she said with a kindly grasp of welcome. "And what can I do for you, Marie?" she continued, still holding and patting the little hand.



“‘Mamma,’ said Philip, ‘aren’t you sick? O! how hot your hand is.’”

“Please, Miss Devereux, you’ve been so good to me that I do not feel at all afraid to ask you a favor.”

“Thank you, Marie: ask it at once.”

"I think, ma'am, that mamma is quite sick. Couldn't you please run up and see what's the matter with her?"

"Certainly, Marie. But I can't get away just now, as I'm expecting the doctor to come any moment to see my patient. But I'll be up in half an hour or so."

"Thank you, ma'am," and Marie turned away.

She was about to go back to her mother, when a heavy, shuffling step upon the stairs caused her to turn smilingly to greet the new arrival. She knew the step, slow and shuffling. Professor Himmelstein was coming to give Philip his vocal lesson.

"Good morning, Professor," she called.

"Ah!" cried the man, raising his spectacled eyes, the severe lines of his face softening instantaneously. "Ah, my little girl! It is like the sunshine to see you. It gives me the fresh heart of grace. Come and help an old man the stairway up!"

The Professor, as he spoke, having taken off his hat, bowed profoundly, though, it must be confessed, with some awkwardness.

He was a thin, spare man of medium height. Being very near-sighted, he had a trick of wrinkling his brows and contracting his eyes when he looked at anything intently. His complexion was dull and sallow, and save for his fiercely luxuriant mustache, his face was clean-shaven. He wore his hair long: it was iron gray, and fell almost to his shoulders. In contradiction to the fierceness of his upper lip was the mild, gentle eye and the sweet, peaceful mouth. Yet that eye could kindle with enthusiasm; and when the Professor discoursed on some topic dear to his heart, it danced and

scintillated behind his strong spectacles. Under his left arm he carried a violin case.

Marie gave the Professor her hand, and together they ascended the staircase.

"Mamma isn't very well, Professor."

"So?" The Professor raised his brows and grew concerned.

"She looks bad. Miss Devereux, the nurse, is coming up to see her in a few minutes."

"So! And where is my young lady, Isobel? What says she?"

"She went out about an hour ago. It's Saturday, you know; and I think she's gone to church. She may be gone an hour. She's always a-praying. I wish I was as good as Isobel."

"She is one saint," said the Professor as they entered the room. Mrs. Lachance was still in the same position—holding her head between her hands.

"Goot morning, goot morning, Mrs. Lachance," said Professor Himmelstein gently. "Ah! Philip so! My goot woman, you look a little beside the weather."

Mrs. Lachance had risen; she supported herself by placing her hands on the back of the chair.

"Good day, Professor," she said. "I'm a thought worse than usual to-day."

"Perhaps the music-lesson would interfere with your health—so?"

"O, no; I will go to my room and lie down. Philip's voice and your violin are nice to listen to even when one is sick."

"You hear that, Philip?" cried the Professor beaming. "What a loafly thing is the voice! A beautiful voice is something that has been stolen from the angels. And you are a thief, Philip. Now, my boy, stand up, and breathe."

Philip, as his mother left the room, took his position—head erect, chest expanded, his hands clasped behind his back.

Professor Himmelstein, meanwhile, opened his case and taking out his violin executed a little fantasia of his own composition. Lightly and deftly his fingers ran up and down the strings, while the violin wailed and sobbed and exulted in response to his inspired touch. As he played his dim eyes grew brighter and brighter, and seemed to gaze through the walls before him into the far away land which only they may see who are dowered with the soul of the artist. The impromptu, short and lovely, came to an end with a flourish of sweet, lingering notes.

"So—o—o—o—o!" cried the Professor, frowning at Philip.

Then began a course in scales and intervals. Starting on F on the E string, Professor Himmelstein coaxed Philip's voice higher, higher, till the room was filled with golden sweet throbbing little notes which rivaled the bird's first sweet rapture in the early spring.

"So—o—o—o—o!" almost sung the Professor, mopping his brow. "It is well. The voice is loafly. We shall now make it as flexible as it was not already before. Here, Philip, follow me with your voice."

Professor Himmelstein then proceeded to lead the marvelous young voice a fairy dance among the sweet notes



"Professor Himmelstein coaxed Philip's voice higher, higher, till the room was filled with golden sweet throbbing little notes."

that lurk high up the shrilling E string. Up and down, with astonishing intervals, went the flexible and thrilling voice, playing at hide-and-seek among the tones of the upper register. Philip, all this time, stood erect, his eye fastened upon the Professor's face, in which he could almost read the coming change in pitch, his ears all attention to the latest variation in the violin's high treble.

As the golden notes came quivering on the charmed air, filling it with the loveliness of sound, Marie, clasping her hands and gazing into Philip's face, became a living, breathless statue. Charlie, however, was not so carried away by the melodious utterance as to neglect his blocks. He continued to build. It happened by and by, then, that just as he was completing a most wonderful edifice, the foundations gave way, and the building fell to the floor with a crash.

Philip's attention was distracted; his eyes wandered, his ears lost their alertness; and in response to a difficult interval, he trebled forth a note that caused the listening Marie to start and shiver.

At the moment, the Professor, his eyes closed, his lips and features moving with every note, was in an ecstasy. On the wings of music, his soul had been raised high, high, beyond the bounds of space and time. This single flat note brought him back to earth with a rude jolt.

"Ach, Gott!" he cried, throwing his violin on a chair, and raising eyes and hands to heaven. "It was the voices of the angels that I hear—and already it is the squeak of a mouse."

He tore at his hair, and began striding heavily up and down the room.

"It is the pearls and the swine. He has the pearl of a voice, and he is a swine—swine is what I say!" he went on, stopping in his walk and glaring at Philip with eyes snapping. "You should grow red, sir, with the shame. When Gott gif you a voice like that, He would not haf done so did He haf foreseen that you would utter such note as that. O, it is too much, too much," and again Professor Himmelstein strode away. He stopped at the window, and glared down into the gloomy street.

Philip meanwhile stood twiddling his thumbs and watching the Professor in mild alarm and some little amusement. He never could quite understand the old musician's irritation over so trifling a thing as a false note.

"There!" continued Himmelstein, after a moment's silence. "You hear that?"

A huckster below was raucously bawling: "*Tatoes, appels! tatoes, appels!*"

"He make that voice, because the goot Gott gif him that voice, and gif him no professor to show him better. But his voice sounded better to my ear than your voice when you do that, sir." He added fiercely. "You made like a cat."

Philip giggled.

"Miau—miau—miau!" shrieked the Professor in a horrible imitation of an impossible cat. While tearing his hair, he was dancing with rage.

Philip tried to look serious. He saw that he had wounded the Professor's feelings.

"Let's try it again, Professor. I'll do my very best this time."

"So!" The old man softened at once. Returning from the window, he took Philip's hand.

"Forgif me, my leetle poy. I was in heaven, and you pulled me down to - to the street with hucksters and carts. Already we shall begin again."

They were still practising when Miss Devereux entered the room quietly.

"Where is your mamma?" she whispered to Marie.

"In her room," answered the child rising, and pointing to the door.

"Very well. I think, dear, I had better see her alone."

Miss Devereux entered the next room, closing the door behind her, and was gone for some minutes.

"How is she, ma'am?" asked the child, when the nurse reappeared.

"Marie, do you know where Isobel is?"

"I think, ma'am, she's praying in the church."

"Go for her at once, dear."

The Professor noticed that Miss Devereux was troubled.

"Is she very bad?" he asked.

"I fear so. She must have absolute quiet; and no one but myself is to enter the room. Hurry, Marie."

"The Professor, swathing his violin in silks, tenderly laid it away in the case. He looked grieved; for he had a genuine admiration for Mrs. Lachance. Opening the door, he glanced back, and caught Philip's eye.

"So!" he said with intense gloom.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH ISOBEL LACHANCE FINDS AND LOSES HER VOCATION.

AT the altar railing and before a statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which was girt about with burning waxen tapers, Isobel Lachance was kneeling, rapt in prayer. Her eyes, pleading, eloquent, were fixed on the Blessed Mother's benign face, as though she were expecting some word or sign from the silent beautiful marble.

Upon the fair, white soul of Isobel the question of her vocation was at this time weighing heavily. School-days were drawing to their close, and the time for choosing could not long be delayed. For some weeks she had been in a state of darkness and doubt. Isobel, as was to be expected, had an inherited taste for art; she loved all things beautiful; especially did she love music. Considering her age and her opportunities, she played the piano with a delicacy of touch and a justness of phrasing and interpretation which were wonderful. Her voice, too, gave promise. It was rich, deep, and of a very rare timber. Professor Himmelstein used to insist that it was worth its weight in gold, till Philip one day asked him how much Isobel's voice weighed. After that question, the Professor, while retaining his admiration, changed the terms of expression. He insisted on Isobel's being sent to study in Berlin. The musical directress at the academy was, if anything, even more enthusiastic than the old Professor.

Mrs. Lachance, herself a musician of no common order,

was moved by their words to consider seriously the matter of ways and means for sending Isobel abroad to finish her vocal training.

But Isobel, much as she loved her chosen art, felt in her soul a hint, a suspicion, that she was called to something higher. At first, she had paid no attention to this still, small voice with its faint vague accents. But prayer and the sacraments had done their work; and now she was waiting eagerly, almost impatiently, for that voice to speak clearly. To-day she was concluding a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. During the preceding days of the novena, her soul had been more troubled than usual. She asked for a sign, and no answer was vouchsafed her. Indeed, darkness and desolation thickened. The world, though, looked bright and promising, the convent sterile and gloomy.

On this Saturday morning, when she went to communion, there came a sudden answer. It is the province of God and of God alone to enter the soul suddenly. In a flash, there came a change. Just as the Sacred Host touched her tongue, her soul was filled with a great love for Christ, while the still, small voice, these many days well-nigh extinct, grew clear and true. Isobel almost heard the words: "*Veni, sponsa Christi, veni, sponsa Christi*":

"Come, thou spouse of Christ! come, thou spouse of Christ!"

Isobel's memory ran over the various communities she had visited and the various Sisters and nuns with whom she was personally acquainted. There was not a single community that she did not admire and revere; not a single



“Isobel, kneeling before the statue of the Blessed Mother, was praying for further light.”

nun that she did not like very much. Three or four of them, indeed, she loved tenderly. As for the academy which she had attended, she loved every desk, every chair, every room in it. It was to her another home. And yet, strangely enough, now that she came to consider the question of devoting her life to Christ in some sisterhood, not one of these dear faces, not one of these loved communities, not even her own convent home appealed to her. That she was called to the higher life, she felt assured. Her doubt and indecision had flown, and God was calling her distinctly. But there still remained in question the particular community or order in which she was to consecrate herself.

After her thanksgiving she went home and during breakfast, so engrossed was she with her own reflections, took little note of what was passing around her. And now she had returned to the church, and kneeling before the statue of the Blessed Mother, she was praying for further light.

Though only eighteen, Isobel was developed beyond her years. She was a woman in experience. She had not the imperious face of her mother: the lines were softer, gentler, and care had not set its stern, rigid marks upon her brow. Just now her face was serious—almost tragically serious. She felt, somehow, that a crisis in her life was at hand. And indeed, a greater crisis than she had imagined was impending.

As she continued praying, there came suddenly another illumination; another wave of consolation bathed her soul. Was the veil about to lift? Was her convent home about to be presented to her inward eye?

"It is coming," she thought. "I feel it. I know it. Yet, how strange! It seems to be before me, and still I cannot see. Surely, my prayer is to be heard at last. Surely, the answer is coming."

At that moment a hand was laid on her shoulder. She started, and turned to find that Marie, looking pale and frightened, was standing beside her.

"Come quick, Isobel. I'm afraid mamma is very sick."

"Is *this* the answer?" thought Isobel, as she genuflected and hurried from the church. Fearful and trembling, she prayed again for light and strength.

Very soon they were home. Isobel would have gone into her mother's room at once. But Miss Devereux blocked the way.

"No, dear; not yet," said the nurse. "I must talk to you first."

"Is mother very ill?"

"Send the children down-stairs."

When Philip and Marie had gone, Miss Devereux said:

"Isobel, your mother, I fear, has a fever of a malignant type."

Isobel's eyes filled with tears; but she held herself bravely.

"I have taken it upon myself to call in a doctor — Doctor Murray, who has charge of my patient down-stairs. He is with her now."

"Well, had I not better go in?"

"I don't know, my dear. If it's contagious, it would be better perhaps for you to stay out."

"No, indeed! My place is beside my mother." And Isobel would have entered then.

"But wait a moment, Isobel. Perhaps it will be good for you to get the children away from here. If that is necessary, you should attend to it before anything else. Once you have entered, you might not be able to see them again without the risk of carrying contagion with you."

"Thank you, Miss Devereux: I did not think of that. You are right, and I shall wait."

When the doctor came out presently, he whispered a word in the nurse's ear. Miss Devereux could not suppress an exclamation of dismay.

"Have you any place to bring the children?" she asked of Isobel.

"I haven't thought of any place: but I can find out."

The nurse took out a lead-pencil, and scribbled an address on a scrap of paper.

"Bring them there, Isobel, at once. They must not come back to this room for anything; nor must you take anything along for them. These people where they are going are charitable friends of mine, and the children will be as safe as though they were at home. Go now, dear, go quickly; I will see to your mother till you come back."

When Isobel returned an hour later, she found the generous Miss Devereux awaiting her at the inner door.

"How is she?" Isobel asked breathlessly.

"I wish I could say something to cheer you, my dear. But it's a sad case and a serious one. If you enter this room, you are taking your life in your hand. Your mother's fever is dangerous and contagious."

“Very well,” answered Isobel decidedly. “Then I am quite willing to take my life in my hand; and if God wants it, He is welcome to it. My place is beside my mother.”

And Isobel entered the sick-room.

“Ah!” she thought, “perhaps this is my vocation, this my calling. Who knows? May God’s holy will be done.”

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH MRS. LACHANCE GIVES ISOBEL A STRANGE ORDER,
AND DIES.

MANY weary, anxious days passed away, and at length came the crisis in Mrs. Lachance's illness. Isobel had been prevailed upon by Miss Devereux to leave the sick-room and take the rest she so much needed after the long, severe watch of the preceding night. But Isobel, at such a time, could not think of sleep or relaxation. The body of her mother, she had reason to believe, was beyond the aid of physicians; but the soul, the immortal soul for which Christ lived and loved and died — that might yet be saved. Kneeling before her crucifix, she passionately besought God to touch with His awakening grace the heart of her poor mother.

Often and often, in season and out, during the past few days had she implored the fever-stricken woman to allow a priest to be called for; but beyond a determined shake of the head no reply had been vouchsafed. Philip and Marie, the good Sisters, and many kind neighbors in the tenement had united in prayer for Mrs. Lachance's conversion. But thus far she had been as imperious and as obstinate as in the days of her health and strength.

With streaming eyes, then, did Isobel once more address herself to prayer. She had been on her knees before the crucifix for more than half an hour, when Miss Devereux hurriedly opened the door of the sick-room.



“You are troubled, dear mother. What is it?”

"Isobel!" she cried. "Why, I—I thought you were resting."

Startled in her devotions, the girl rose quickly from her knees.

"I was praying for mother," she said simply.

"And she needs prayer, my dear. I fear that she is sinking. She is quite conscious, but so weak! Perhaps you had better stay beside her."

Isobel hastened into the next room. As she entered, Mrs. Lachance turned her face towards her child, while a gleam of recognition overspread her features.

"O, my dear mother, my dear, dear mother," she cried, throwing herself beside the bed, and laying her cheek against her mother's, "you have been so good to me and Philip and Marie. Under God, we owe everything to you. You have raised us good Catholics and—O, if anything should happen, and you were to die without having a priest, I don't see how I should get over it."

Isobel was overcome with grief. A thin, wasted hand touched her cheek, softly, tenderly.

"Yes, dear; I understand." How thin, how feeble her voice! "You are right. I have been so proud. Quick, dear—indeed, indeed, I want a priest. Go, dearest, quickly, and while you go, pray for your poor, proud, unhappy mother."

Isobel could scarcely believe her ears. Never before had her mother spoken thus. Never before had there dropped from her mother words so tender, so humble, so gentle. She gazed at the patient's face. Along with the change wrought by illness, she observed that the proud,

imperious expression was gone, and the hardness had melted away. Her prayer was heard. Grace had knocked at that poor heart—had knocked and entered and taken full possession.

“O, thank God! thank God!” cried the girl, and printing a kiss on the mother’s brow, she hurried away on her sacred mission, while Miss Devereux, meanwhile, arranged the table, setting upon it crucifix and holy water and candle.

Quickly the priest came, and when he had entered Mrs. Lachance’s room, Miss Devereux and Isobel remained in the front room, waiting and praying.

Fully a quarter of an hour passed, before he came out. He was pale and excited.

“Isobel,” he said quickly, “go to your mother at once. She has something important to tell you, which she wishes you to hear from her own lips. Mine are sealed, and, besides, I do not quite understand. Hurry, my child; she is sinking fast. I will return when she has told you and anoint her.”

Isobel darted into the room. As she entered, Mrs. Lachance’s face lighted up with joy. Poor woman! She was very meek and gentle now. Love and sorrow and prayer and the nearness of death—above all, grace—had changed the proud woman almost beyond belief. She held the crucifix in her hands, having just pressed it to her lips.

“Mother! mother! O, how faint you look! And, mother, I see that you wish to say something. You are troubled, dear mother. What is it?”

“Isobel!” The word was so faint that the girl scarcely

heard it; and yet in the faint accents there was a world of anxiety. There could be no doubt of it: Mrs. Lachance had something very important to communicate.

"Speak, my mother, speak," she answered, bending low. "I am listening."

"Isobel, pardon—forgive."

"Yes, O mother! you know I love you."

"Love Philip, Marie and Charlie. Give them my love. Listen."

Mrs. Lachance was bringing out each word laboriously, and with long pauses between. She was growing visibly weaker. But the anxiety in her eyes was something that filled the daughter with a sense of awe.

"Yes, mother; I am listening. Go on, mother."

"Isobel, go—go—to—Milwaukee," gasped the dying woman. As though fearful that she had not been understood, she repeated: "To Milwaukee—Milwaukee." She repeated the name of the city with a violent endeavor to be distinct. The effort exhausted her. Her head fell back, but still those hungry, pathetic, eager, anxious eyes remained fixed so pleadingly on Isobel.

"Yes, mother; I will go."

The trouble left the poor failing eyes at that, and the mother essayed, lifting her head, to speak further. "Go—go—"

There came a fit of coughing, which racked the poor, panting frame frightfully.

"Jesus! Mary!" she gasped, and again fell to coughing as before. The crucifix fell from the nerveless hand to the floor. Isobel picked it up at once, and pressed it to her

mother's lips. She kissed it eagerly, and the coughing ceased suddenly as it had suddenly begun.

Then she endeavored to speak again, but her words were wild and inarticulate. She was delirious. Before the priest returned with the holy oils, she had sunk into unconsciousness.

"Father," sobbed Isobel, hastening out to meet him, "I believe mother is dying."

The priest entered the room, and, having taken one look at the woman, hastily administered the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and began to read the prayers for the dying. Before he had quite finished, Mrs. Lachance gave a little sigh, a gasp, and then her features became still and calm.

"God help you, my dear Isobel," whispered Miss Devereux. She did not need to say more; her face told Isobel that all was over. Tenderly, tearfully, she bent over her mother's body and kissed the face.

"Dear mother," she murmured, "God has answered my prayer, and you have died a Catholic. Now I see my vocation. It is to take your place, and be a mother to Marie and Philip and Charlie."

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH ISOBEL ANNOUNCES HER RESOLUTION AND PROFESSOR HIMMELSTEIN CREATES A SCENE.

ON a morning in December, a carriage came to a stop in front of the tenement. Miss Devereux, having got out first herself, assisted Marie, Philip and Charlie to alight. The children, although they were rosier of complexion than when they left their tenement lodgings in the latter part of November, were quiet and sad-faced. The red eyes and swollen cheeks showed that they had been crying.

As they turned their steps towards the entrance of their old home, Isobel came hurrying down the staircase to meet them.

"My dear Marie, my dear Philip, my poor little Charlie!" she said, embracing them tenderly.

"Isobel, I want to see mamma; I want to kiss her good-by," sobbed Marie.

"She isn't dead!" Philip exclaimed. "I can't believe it—I can't believe it. Is she really dead, Isobel?"

"Yes, dear," answered Isobel, while Charlie broke into a low wail; "poor mother is dead. And you cannot see her, Marie, because she was buried, and the doctor did not wish any of you to come home before the burial. But she spoke often of all of you, and sent you ever so much love. Just before she died, she mentioned your names. And she died peaceful and happy, with all the sacraments of the Church. Now, my dears, do not cry."

Marie and Philip joined Charlie in weeping afresh.

"Come, Isobel," whispered Miss Devereux. "It will pass in a few minutes. Let us bring the dear little orphans to your rooms. They behaved very nicely these three weeks; and the people they stayed with are charmed with them."

Miss Devereux took Charlie in her arms; and Isobel, placing herself between Philip and Marie, put a protecting arm around each, and led them up the stairs into the front room.

"Why," cried Philip looking around, "what's happened to our room? Everything's so changed."

"I have been packing up, my dears; we are getting ready to go away in a few days."

"Go away!" gasped Philip.

"Go where?" Marie inquired.

"My dears, we are going to Milwaukee."

Philip stared; Marie looked puzzled.

"Why, that's ever so far away," objected the little girl, "and we—we don't know any people there, do we?"



"She had been a bread-winner long enough to know that it is worth while looking many a time before leaping once."

"Are we going to stay there?" put in Philip before Isobel could answer Marie's question.

"We shall stay there for a while, at least, Philip."

"And then we shall come back to New York, sha'n't we?"

"I don't know, Philip. All I know at present is that we're going to Milwaukee. But it is a very beautiful city; and I will take you around to see everything; and we shall travel through a fine country on the way there, and see Chicago, and all sorts of sights."

"O, it's not so bad!" said Philip, becoming suddenly comforted.

"Perhaps we may like it better than New York," added Marie brightening.

The two children fell to talking with each other while Charlie, who had taken no apparent interest in the conversation, was busying himself looking up certain of his pet possessions.

"But, Isobel - are you serious?" asked Miss Devereux.

"Yes, Miss Devereux, I am. Sit down," Isobel continued, "you have been so good and kind to my mother, and the children and myself, that I think it but right you should know our plans."

"Thank you, Isobel. You know what a hearty interest I take in anything that concerns you and yours."

"Very well Philip and Marie, come here, my dears; I want you both to listen too."

The children ceased their chattering, and drew near.

"When mother took a change for the worse, you remember, Miss Devereux, you called me in. She knew me,

and at once told me that she wanted a priest. I hurried away and caught Father Reid, just as he was leaving the parochial residence. He came with me at once without delaying to return for the Blessed Sacrament. He began hearing mother's confession; but noticing that she was sinking fast, and knowing that she wanted to tell me something that she considered to be of the greatest importance, he got through as quickly as possible, and sent me in to get her last words, while he went back for the holy oils. When I came in, I could see on her face—and it was such a beautiful face after confession, my dears—that she had something on her mind which she was burning to tell me. She tried to talk, but it was very hard for her. She said, 'Go to Milwaukee'; and then a fit of coughing came upon her. She recovered sufficiently to utter the sacred names, and after that she became delirious, then unconscious, and so she died."

"Is mamma really dead?" persisted Philip. "I can't believe it. I seem to see her sitting here now, the way she used to sit so often, with her face in her hands and all bowed down."

"But why should you go to Milwaukee?" objected Miss Devereux. "It is expensive, and is sure to be a wild-goose chase."

"That's what everyone says," answered Isobel. "Even the superioress of the academy advises me to remain. Indeed, she is very, very kind. She has more music pupils at the school just now than the Sisters can attend to, and she has offered me a position that would provide for us all. But if you had seen my mother's face and heard her words,

Miss Devereux, you would think twice before slighting so solemn a command. It was mother's last wish, and she was so eager about it."

"Are you sure that you are acting prudently?" Miss Devereux went on.

"As the world regards matters, no. Indeed, it seems foolish. When we get to Milwaukee we shall have very little money left."

"But what will you do when you get there? Have you any friends or acquaintances?"

"Not one; we are utter strangers there."

"And perhaps," continued the nurse, "your mother was raving when she spoke. Did you think of that? Her fever was very high."

"Yes, I have thought of that, too. Sometimes I have been inclined to believe that she was. You see, I feel quite sure that my mother has no acquaintances in that part of the world. As far as I can remember, she never even spoke of Milwaukee before. I have always thought that she had no friends in the West. And yet in spite of all this, I cannot bring myself to believe that she was out of her mind when she spoke."

"And are you going to give up an assured position and risk everything in the world on such an uncertainty as that?"

"Yes, Miss Devereux; I prayed and consulted, and my mind is made up. After all, I may find a place in Milwaukee."

"I can work, too," observed Philip. "I can sell papers."

"And I'll take care of Charlie, and keep house," put in Marie.

"And if we get a house with a door-knob, I'll open it to the people that ring the bell," said Charlie proudly.

The little ones had already worked themselves up to a pitch of glorious excitement. Charlie, after speaking, straddled a chair, and began to play "choo-choo." In spirit he was already speeding away towards the Cream City.

Philip and Marie were flushed with joy. Think of it! to get away from the big city, and travel through field and forest, village and countryside, away out to the far West, to lands and peoples and places they had never dreamed of seeing. And then to begin life anew! It was like the children in the stories who went away from home to seek their fortunes. O, it was glorious!

But the practical Miss Devereux failed to see the romance of the situation. She had been a breadwinner long enough to know that it is worth while looking many a time before leaping once.

"You say," she went on, "that you have consulted. But just a while ago, you said that every one was against it."

"I was speaking roughly," said Isobel with a faint smile. "All the kind people in the house—and they have been so good to me, God bless them - are opposed to it. Then the superioress of the academy and my teacher there are set against it, too. They say that God has put me in charge of these little ones, and that it is my first duty to look out for them."

"Exactly, Isobel. And really, I fail to see how you can get over that."

"Miss Devereux, don't you know the fourth commandment?"

"Well, I believe I do," she answered with a smile.

"Honor thy father and mother," put in Marie.

"Very well. I don't think God will abandon those who are obedient to their parents. If ever I received a command in my life, it was when my mother said, 'Go to Milwaukee.' For the rest I trust to God's good providence."

"But did you ask your confessor about it?"

"Of course; and he told me to pray and then follow my own lights: and that is exactly what I am doing."

"Isobel, you are obstinate."

"Perhaps I am," answered the girl with her gentle smile, "but of one thing I am sure; and that is that I am carrying out my mother's last wish. Come in," she went on in answer to a knock from without.

The door opened and a girl of about fourteen entered with a bunch of roses in her hand.

"Why, Sally!" cried Marie.

"Halloa, Sal," said Philip, while Charlie ran over and reached for the flowers.

Sally Rogers was blushing under the gaze of Miss Devereux.

"If you please, Miss Isobel," she said, "my mother sends her kindly regards, and she sends you these flowers."

"Thank you, Sally," said Isobel, taking the roses and kissing the girl's cheek. "Your mother is too kind. What beautiful roses! How nice it is to live with people who are so kind and thoughtful. Miss Devereux, this is Sally Rogers, and she's a dear little friend of mine."

Sally blushed again, and became extremely self-conscious as she shook hands.

"Well, good-by," she said. "Miss Isobel," she whispered as she passed her, "I went to communion for your mother twice, and I say my beads for her every day."

"God bless you, dear," said Isobel, holding the girl's



"Seated, tense and eager, on the edge of the chair."

hand and going with her to the door. "I shall never forget your kindness and your mother's."

"What a modest child," observed Miss Devereux, as Isobel closed the door.

"Modest," repeated Isobel. "She is an angel. She's

been raised here, and some of the tenants have been pretty wicked; but the worst of them take off their hats when they see that little girl, and hush their talk, and look ashamed; though her mother is a washerwoman, and the girl can hardly write her name. I saw in one of Dr. Egan's books a story about lilies in tenements—lilies among thorns. She's one, and not the only one either, God be thanked for it. If Dr. Egan knew her, he'd write another story."

"I wish Dr. Egan knew you," reflected Miss Devereux. "In speaking of that other, you have described yourself."

A shuffling step was heard outside.

"Hurrah!" cried Philip. "Here comes Professor Himmelstein!" and followed by Marie and Charlie he rushed from the room.

There was a great to-do outside; silvery laughter, shrill pipings, the deep full voice of the Herr Professor, alternating between German and broken English, and a scuffling and pushing which gave the effect of the moving of a piano.

"Goot day," cried the Professor, beaming in at the doorway. The Professor, accompanied by his three little friends, presented a grotesque yet pretty tableau to the young ladies within. Charlie, mounted on the Professor's shoulders, had just succeeded in pushing down that bewildered and delighted gentleman's hat over his eyes. Philip was in his arms, while Marie was rummaging in the pockets of his coat.

Coming forward, Isobel restored order; and relieving the Professor of his hat and coat, conducted him to his favorite chair, where he at once proceeded to deal out candy and trinkets to the little ones about his knee.

"Isobel," he began when he had satisfied the children.
"I bring you goot news."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; you need not worry ofer what you shall eat or what you shall drink. Already it is provided."

"I beg your pardon?"

"There is your fortune!" said the Professor rising from his chair, and pointing dramatically at Philip.

"Really, Herr Professor," said Isobel, "I don't quite follow."

"It's the *woice!*" continued the Professor with a world-embracing gesture and a smile of pure happiness.

"The voice?"

"So. That poy is the greatest soprano in New York."

"Indeed, Herr Professor, thanks to you, he has a lovely voice."

"Loafly! It is not the word. It is a hefen-message. And when they hear it, the people of the city will crazy go."

"The people of New York hear it? What are you driving at?"

"He will gif concerts. He will sing, and the people will come—and you will get the money—tousans and tousans of tollars." The old man's eyes were dancing as he spoke.

"You mean, then, that you intend to make a sort of infant phenomenon of him."

"Make? Donner und blitzen—no. Not make: already he *is* a infant venomenon."

"Professor," said Isobel, nerving herself for a scene.
"Please sit down."

The subject of this discussion was eating candy, and, in common with Marie and Charlie, paying little attention to the scene passing under his eyes. Miss Devereux tried to look indifferent; but she was intensely interested.

"Now, Professor," continued Isobel, as the musician seated himself tense and eager on the edge of the chair, "I want you to listen to me. Mother is dead, and I am responsible for Philip. And I tell you I would rather see him —"

She paused suddenly, and turned to the children. "Go down-stairs, my dears, for a while and play in the sunlight." While the children were leaving the Professor mopped his forehead, and compressed his lips. His heart was beating fast, and he looked as though he were about to be subjected to a heavy ordeal.

"I tell you," resumed Isobel, pale and quivering, "I would rather see Philip dead before me now—dear, innocent Philip—than put him before the public as an infant phenomenon!"

"So?" cried the Professor clasping his hands. Beads of sweat started upon his brow.

"Indeed, yes." Isobel's head was lifted high, her eyes were flashing. There was at the moment a touch of the mother's imperiousness in her demeanor.

"Ach Gott!" groaned the Professor throwing out his hands, and letting them fall helplessly, "I understand not."

"Professor, if my little brother were to appear in public and were to succeed, he would be everybody's darling. Ladies would pet him and spoil him. He would be in the

papers and fawned upon and flattered and caressed. Even if he were an angel, he would be spoiled."

"With you and me to take care of him," ventured the Professor in a broken voice.

"With you and me and a dozen of the best to care for him," answered Isobel. "Worst of all, his life would be ruined; for he would live in an inverted order."

"An inverted order!" repeated Himmelstein. "An order inverted." Gasping he took off his glasses and blinked at them. "My dear Isobel, make me not such words."

"I mean," continued Isobel, "that he would begin his life the wrong way. As a child, he would be earning his living and appearing in public. He would be honored and applauded. Instead of leading the quiet, retired, studious, active, healthy life which is the rightful heritage of children, he would be before the footlights, and up till late in the night, and leading a life which would utterly unfit him for his duties as a man. By the time he was grown up, he would in all probability be utterly worthless, utterly good for nothing."

"But the voice! the angel voice! Is the flower to blush unseen in the air of the desert? Isobel, dear Isobel, think of the voice!" and the Professor clasped his hands, and gazed out of his spectacles, which he had put on very much awry, at the girl before him.

Thus far the Professor had been rising and falling back into his seat at short intervals, now he stood up and kept that position for some time.

"O Gott!" he said, raising his eyes and hands, "how I haf loafed that voice; I haf watched it and trained it; I

haf thought of it by day, and dreamed of it by night. Isobel, you must gif in. I will introduce my great soprano to the American public, and then I will be ready to die."

Miss Devereux noticed tears in Isobel's eyes. The Professor was pleading as though for his own life.

"No, Professor; it cannot be. I have thought of it over and over. I owe it to my conscience and to my mother not to allow Philip on the stage."

The Professor sank back in the chair, buried his face in his hands, and groaned.

"Isobel!" he said after an awkward pause.

"I am listening, Professor."

"Isobel, I am an old man, and my life has been one failure."

Isobel put her handkerchief to her eyes. Miss Devereux was deeply moved.

"I haf not long to live. Yes, my life has been a failure; and it will be a failure unless—"

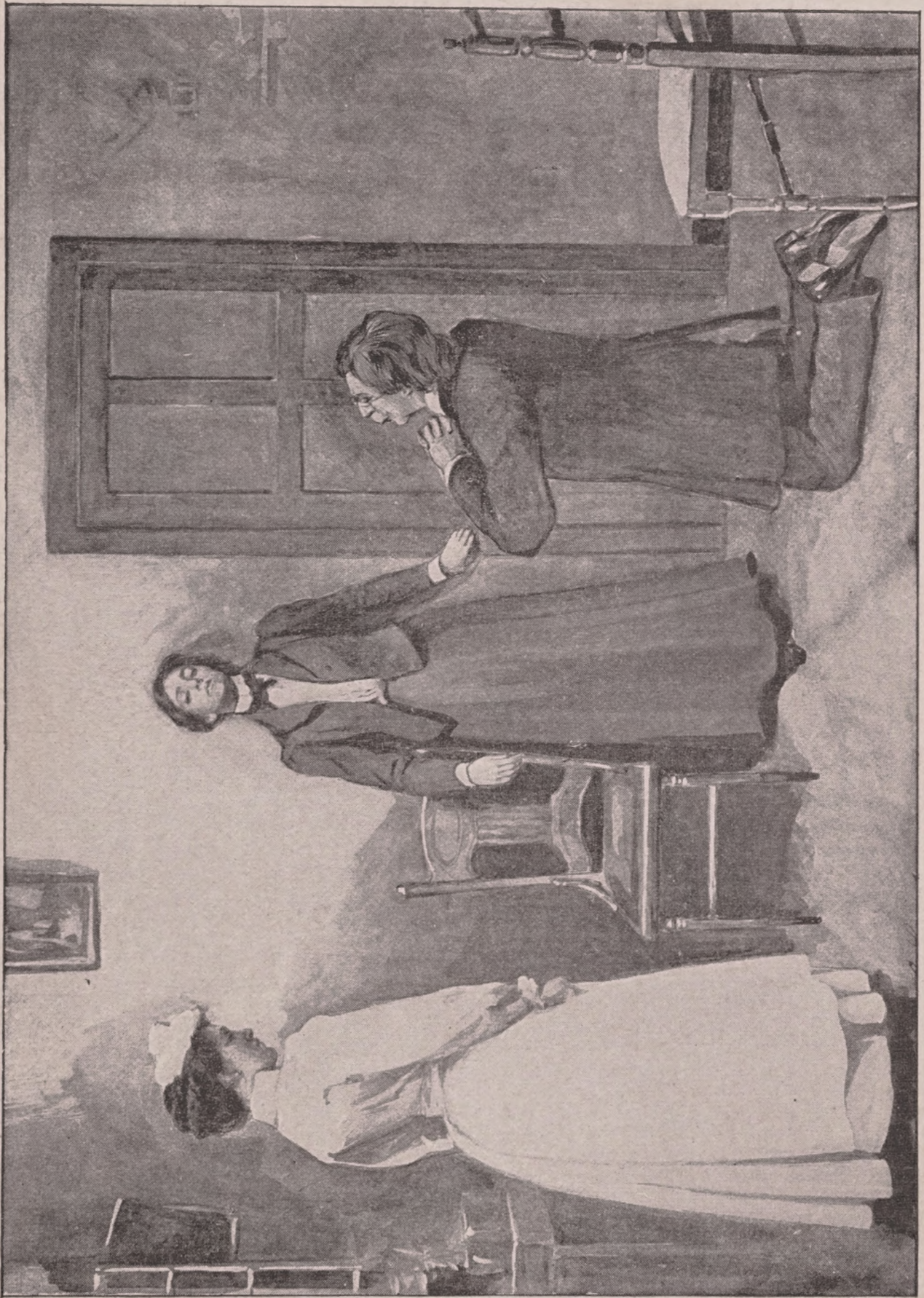
The poor man paused. Then he rose again.

"Unless my leetle Philip sing before the public."

Isobel said nothing. Her sense of duty was struggling with her gentler feelings. She loved the good, old Professor.

"Isobel," he went on, "for two years have I trained that voice of heaven. It has been the joy of my days. And I haf always dreamed to hear it in a great hall with many lights where the people are seated, but not breathing, for they wish to catch the every note of that angel voice."

Himmelstein's voice was low and pleading. Every tone wrenched at the heart-strings of the two listeners.



“ ‘ Isobel, on my knees, I ask you. Once, just once, let me haf my leetle poy to appear in public.’ ”

Miss Devereux would have left the room ; but a gesture from Isobel kept her where she was.

"It has been my one dream, and, Isobel, by God, it must come true."

The awful words were not lightly pronounced. As the Professor uttered them, they might have been a prayer.

"Isobel, do you hear me, my dear?"

"Professor," said Isobel, her voice quivering, "tomorrow we leave for Milwaukee."

The poor old man put his hand to his heart, and sank back upon the chair. He turned deadly pale, and gasped.

"Does Philip go too?" he asked presently.

"Yes."

"My Gott! Isobel, leave him with me. I will answer for him with everything, with my life."

"Ah, dear Professor, why do you torture me who love you so? You know how we all love you. You know how grateful we are all to you for what you have done for Philip. None of us shall ever forget your kindness, your pleasant visits, your little remembrances. The children adore you. And yet, you ask what I think is impossible. I cannot—God help me—I cannot grant what you ask."

Once more the Professor rose. Advancing, he fell on his knees before Isobel.

"O, don't—don't!" cried the girl, turning her head away, and burying her face in her hands. "This is too much."

"Isobel! Isobel! Nefer yet haf I on my knees fallen except to Gott. Isobel, on my knees, I ask you. Once, just once, only once, let me haf my leetle poy to appear in

public. Let him stay here with me and I will bring him on myself. Will you? will you?"

"Get up, dear friend," said Isobel, catching his hands in hers. "You are giving me a bitter, bitter hour."

"Say yes," implored the Professor, still on his knees.

"If I could—O, if I could! But I cannot."

With a muffled cry the old man rose from his knees, threw his hands wildly into the air and rushed from the room.

"Isobel, I never had to go through anything like that in my life. I never imagined you could be so strong. You were as firm—why, my dear! what's the matter?"

Isobel had grown deadly pale, and was tottering. Miss Devereux caught her or she would have fallen.

"Are you ill, dear?"

But Isobel, clinging to the nurse, made no reply; for she could not speak.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH THE LACHANCES MAKE THEIR FAREWELLS AND
GO TO MILWAUKEE.

WHEN it became known through the tenement house that Isobel was fixed on leaving for Milwaukee, the good, simple people, her fellow lodgers, could not do enough to show their good will. All manner of attentions were showered upon her and the little ones—in consequence of which Master Philip was taken ill from over-eating himself.

Many callers, school friends and Sisters, kept her engaged throughout the day; and, had it not been for the services of Marie and Miss Devereux, it is doubtful whether the one family trunk would have been ready for the express-wagon.

Half an hour before they set out for the depot, Professor Himmelstein made his farewells. The old man as he entered, wore a sad face. His head was somewhat bowed, and he looked as though he had gone through a severe illness.

"This is very, very kind of you, dear Professor," said Isobel, taking the old man's hand; and she gazed into his face with pity, gratitude and tenderness.

"It is for me a funeral," said the Professor with a wan smile. "My heart goes with you all; and it will never come back."

"We shall write to you,—Philip and Marie and myself."

"Ah! you will not forget me?"

"Indeed, no. We shall never forget our best and kindest friend."

The old man removed his glasses, and wiping his eyes, smiled.

"Thank you, Isobel, thank you. What is it that the great Thackeray says: '*Non omnis moriar* — I shall not die altogether, if dying I live yet in a tender heart or two.' So! I will wait for the letters till I go!"

"Go?"

"Yes, Isobel. I loaf no more New York. I will return to the Vaterland, and die among the ones I loafed when I was a poy."

Just here the children entered. They greeted the Professor with effusiveness, but he did not answer in kind, though nothing could be more affectionate than his manner of receiving them. For each and every one he had a present, a pretty gold watch for Philip, a ring for Marie, and a splendid Noe's ark for Charlie.

"And now, my children, you will pray for the old man who nefer forgets you?"

"You bet, we will," answered Philip.

"Indeed, yes," added Marie.

"Why don't you come along with us?" asked Charlie. In answer the old man sighed heavily.

"Isobel," he said presently, "I would see you for a minute."

The girl brought him over to the window. For a

moment, the Professor's face worked convulsively; and Isobel suspecting that there was to be another scene, paled and began to tremble.

"No, no, my dear," said the old man, divining her thought, "I fight no more: I am beaten, and I—I forgive you. But the wound is still there," and he laid his hand on his heart.

"You don't know how grieved and sorry I am, Professor, that I had to act as I did."

"So? Well, we will not further go in that matter. Isobel, I—I—you are going to a strange place and among strange people who know you not. I know that you have not much money. And I have money that I do not use. Do not turn red, my dear; do not shake your head. Do not be proud with an old man who loaves you all."

With trembling fingers, Professor Himmelstein took out a roll of bills. One would think he was about to commit a crime.

"Here it is—one hundred fifty tollars. Money! poof! I care for it not. But I loaf these one hundred fifty tollars, and I kiss them with my lips, so! because they will serve my little boys and Marie and Isobel."

The proud spirit of the girl was conquered by this knightly speech and knightly deed. All his wonted awkwardness was gone as he pressed his lips to the money.

"My dear, dear friend—I had made up my mind to accept money from no one and under no consideration; but you have conquered. I will take half of it—"

"No, no!" protested the Professor. "Take it all, or I tear what you take not into paper bits over your eyes."

"Well, I take it all, on one condition."

At the word "condition," Himmelstein muttered something in German. His words had strength in them, and perhaps it is as well that Isobel did not understand his native tongue.

"On one condition: namely, that I use it only in case of extreme need. Otherwise I shall hold it in my keeping, but it shall remain yours."

"I argue not with you," said Himmelstein. "But take it, and do with it as you will. And, Isobel, write not to me. I want no letters. I want no messages."

"Why not?"

"Because," and the strong voice broke—"I want to forget."

The old man turned away.

"Goot-by, children," he called.

They came and clung to him, and bade him hearty farewell. Himmelstein said little; but he looked at their faces hungrily.

Their farewell was loving enough; but even as he turned, Philip took out his watch and gazed upon it with perfect satisfaction; Marie held the precious stone of her ring to the light, and Charlie was



"He walked or rather staggered away."

putting a pair of yellow elephants in the rear of a great animal procession.

“So!” groaned the old man dismally.

Isobel accompanied him down the steps.

“Good-by! good-by!” she said bravely, holding her feelings in restraint. “Never a night, never a day shall pass, without my remembering the best and truest and dearest friend we’ve ever had.”

“So!” said the Professor. “I will try to forget. And Isobel write me once,—once only that you are arrived safe.”

He walked or rather staggered away.

An hour later the Lachances were speeding on their way to Milwaukee.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH PHILIP TELLS ISOBEL ALL ABOUT MR. DUNNE,
AND FINDING A DOLLAR IN HIS POCKET, THINKS
HIMSELF RICH.

HAVING explained at length how it came to pass that Philip Lachance was to be seen on Milwaukee Street, on a cold, dark afternoon of December, it is high time to return to the little fellow, whom meanwhile, we have left outside in the cold awaiting the arrival of Isobel.

Thoroughly warmed by his stay in the caterer's, Philip frisked about quite gaily. Every shop underwent his enthusiastic inspection; he forgot that he had no overcoat, and, indeed, that there was such a thing as cold or care or trouble in the world.

But even the splendors of holiday displays tire, sooner or later, the youngest and brightest eyes. Philip, accordingly, began after a delightful quarter of an hour to cast about for some new object of interest. The trolley cars engaged his attention; but they did not appeal to him strongly. He compared them, somewhat scornfully it must be admitted, with the elevated railway system of New York. Very soon he began to feel that it was cold, and to grow weary of his long stay on the streets. Suddenly, and in the very middle of a yawn, his eye brightened. Isobel was approaching. Her head was bent, and there was no mistaking the despondency in her face. The cares and sorrows and responsibilities of the last four weeks had wrought their

effect upon Isobel. She had grown much thinner, and there were hollows about her eyes which told of weeping and of want of sleep. Her complexion had grown paler; even the fresh breezes of that invigorating afternoon brought not the red to her cheeks.

Almost immediately she perceived Philip, and at once her expression changed. The lax muscles of the face awakened, the air of despondency disappeared, and a smile lightened up her features.

"O, Philip," she said, "I am so sorry to have kept you waiting in this bitter cold. Did you suffer from it, dear?"

"Not much, I didn't," cried Philip, emphatically, and with a caper. "I've just been having a great time. Look at this, will you?" And Philip held up the two boxes of candy.

"Why, where in the world did you get them?" asked Isobel, as they made toward Wisconsin Street.

"Mr Dunne gave 'em to me."

"Mr. Dunne! Who is Mr Dunne?"

"He's a nice man with a mustache and a most solemn look. He pulls at his mustache and looks at you so puzzled-like"

"But, Philip, you don't mean to say that you took those things from a stranger?"

"O, but he wasn't a stranger. He's a friend of mine."

"I hope you are not going to beg, Philip."

"Beg! *He* did the begging. He made me come into Conroy's and gave me a lot of oysters and things. *I* didn't ask for anything."

After many questions, Isobel contrived to get a fair account of her little brother's somewhat unusual adven

tures. The singing of Noel was hardly mentioned. To that incident Philip attached no importance.

"I'm afraid, my dear," she continued, "that it was very imprudent on my part to leave you alone on a crowded street. This time it turned out all very well; but you might have fallen in with some one not quite so nice as Mr. Dunne."

"He *was* nice, I tell you."

"Indeed he was!" Isobel had learned how Mr. Dunne refrained from inquiring too closely into the child's family history. Evidently, she reflected, he was a gentleman.

"Won't there be great times when Marie and Charlie get hold of this candy?" exclaimed Philip, as, crossing the bridge, they came upon Grand Avenue on the west side.

"I notice, Philip, that you haven't opened either box. That is very nice of you."

"I eat a lot when I was at Conroy's," answered the young gentleman with much simplicity, "and so I didn't care about taking any."

Isobel smiled—this time without effort.

"Were there any letters from New York, Isobel?"

"That's a fact— Guess whom I heard from. His letter came yesterday, but I only got it this afternoon."

"Was it from Professor Himmelstein?"

"How well you guess! He writes a beautiful letter. I'll read it to you when we get inside."

"What does he say?"

"He says that he can't care for New York any more, and that he's off for Germany."

"Is he going for good?"

"He doesn't say."

"And when is he going?"

"He was to have sailed yesterday."

"I'm sorry, Isobel. I liked the Professor. He was mighty good to me."

"He was good to all of us. We owe him so much, and I do not see how we can ever repay him as we should. At least, we can pray for him; and I hope, my dear, you will never forget the dear old Professor as long as you live."

"Every time I sing and every time I pray, I think of him," said the boy. "When I grow up I intend to get a boat and go across and see him. You've got his address, haven't you?"

"Not yet; he promises to send it when he settles down. Philip, I must get you an overcoat. I have waited and waited for money, but it is not coming. You see, my dear, I don't like to see you so thinly clad, but, at the same time, I hate to use the money which the good Professor forced me to take."

"But he wanted you to use it," said Philip, easily.

"Yes; but I said I would not, unless it became absolutely necessary. I was hoping to get some work here—sewing, or copying or teaching the piano; but so far there seems to be no prospect at all."

"Didn't you get that job you went after just now, Isobel?"

"No, dear; and I learned that times are at present very hard in this city, and many good people have lost work, and there's much destitution. The man I went to, on learning that I came from New York, said I was a fool to

leave my friends, and come to a place where the natives were hard pressed to make ends meet. He spoke roughly, but I can't blame him. I'm afraid, dear, that we shall have to go back at the end of this week, if not sooner."

"Why not go now?" Philip asked.

"Because, dear, although I have obeyed mother's command already, I should like to stay a few days longer to see if anything should come of it. There is still enough money of our own to last us to the end of the week, and then, if I see no work in sight, I can use the dear Professor's money to get us back."

"All right, Isobel. Halloo? what's this?"

Philip, whose hand had slipped into his jacket pocket, brought out a bright silver dollar.

"Why, Philip!"

"Good gracious! I didn't know I had a dollar, Isobel. I wonder where it came from?"

"Mr. Dunne, perhaps?"

"I don't know. He didn't say anything about money. But he was awful good. Perhaps he slipped it in, when I wasn't looking. Say, Isobel, to-morrow I'll hire a sleigh, and take you all out sleigh-riding. Mayn't I?"

"Certainly, dear. If you can get a sleigh for a dollar." And Isobel laughed almost gaily.

"O you can get anything, almost, for a dollar." They had now reached their lodging-house; and Philip, radiant with the anticipation of the pleasure he was about to give Charlie and Marie tripped up the steps, and rushed into the house, his sweet voice filling its every nook and corner, as he shouted for his brother and sister.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONCERT, THE FACE AT THE WINDOW, AND THE MYSTERY OF THE OVERCOATS.

THE Lachances, as Philip had informed Mr. Dunne, were staying at a boarding house situated between Tenth and Eleventh on Sycamore Street. It was kept by a Mrs. Downing. The house, for many years, had abounded in lodgers; but, owing to certain changes in the management of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, it had been left to comparative solitude just a few days before our friends reached Milwaukee.

On the morning of their arrival, Mrs. Downing chanced to be going down Sycamore. As it happened, she came face to face with Isobel on the outskirts of the tiny park which fronts the station. Mrs. Downing was attracted by Isobel's face; she observed, on taking a second glance, the girl's air of perplexity, and at once asked whether she could be of any service.

Mrs. Downing began with an act of charity, and ended with a stroke of business. But we must not wrong her. The good woman was from the first a friend rather than a landlady; and Isobel was in luck. She could have traversed Milwaukee from the east side to the west side without meeting a kinder, a more sympathetic hostess. Mrs. Downing at once warmed to the children; she cared for them as though they were her own; and Isobel, accordingly, was

free to come and go as she pleased, knowing that Philip and Charlie and Marie were in good hands.

"Well, what luck, Isobel?" asked Mrs. Downing, as she met Isobel and Philip on their return.

"I've had none, Mrs. Downing; but Philip has had plenty."

"Look at this, Mrs. Downing," cried Philip, ceasing to bawl for Marie and Charlie; and he exhibited to her delighted gaze the boxes of candy and the shining silver dollar.

While Mrs. Downing was holding up her hands in delight, down, like a wolf on the fold, came Marie and Charlie. Shrill cries, gurgles of joy, and a great scramble followed at once. But Philip held manfully to his prizes.

"Stop your scrapping, will you?" he cried, "or you'll get no candy."

Isobel restored peace by taking possession of the boxes herself and promising a fair distribution after supper, whereupon out of hand all three clamored for that simple meal.

In the interest of law and order, Mrs. Downing rang the supper bell, and quickly all were seated at table. Much to the kind woman's concern, very little was eaten. Isobel, as Mrs. Downing noticed, practically ate nothing. Mrs. Downing watched her furtively. How nervous the girl was getting; she started at the slightest unusual noise, and her fingers were never quiet. Since reaching the house she had not taken one hearty meal, though she made pretence of eating as well as the others. On this particular evening, however, Isobel was not fasting alone. Philip, for reasons obvious to the reader of chapter the second, was not hungry.

Charlie and Marie were so wrought up by visions of candy that they would not (could not, indeed) bring themselves to consider lamb chops, potatoes, and plain bread and butter. So there was little eating and much chattering. All the Lachances had sweet voices, and, as they laughed and chattered, they reminded one of a festive gathering of nightingales.

Supper, accordingly, was despatched with a speed which was positively distressing to Mrs. Downing. Then came the candy distribution, and a diffusion of happiness which set the little ones bubbling over with joy. When the enthusiasm, natural to so pleasant an occasion, had abated somewhat, and when Philip had eaten all the candy he felt quite equal to, he once more related his afternoon's adventure, laying, as was to have been expected of him, but little emphasis on his singing of Noël. Mrs. Downing showed some excitement when he mentioned the name of Mr. John Dunne.

"Mr. John Dunne!" she repeated. "Did you say Mr. John Dunne? Why, we all know him. He's a bachelor; but, no matter—he's one of the leading parishioners of the Gesu. Everybody likes him. He's a very good man, and belongs to the upper ten. He doesn't go into society much, but when he does, he goes in the best society, and"—here she glanced impressively at Isobel—"he's a bachelor, too."

Mrs. Downing was somewhat disconcerted by the indifference with which Isobel received this last statement.

"Certainly, from what Philip says, he must be a nice man," remarked Isobel, impersonally.

"Didn't he look a little sad, Philip?" inquired the lady of the house.

"Well, yes, he did. But when he did smile, it was worth while looking at him."

"Poor fellow!" apostrophized Mrs. Downing. "Twenty years ago he was the jolliest youngster of twenty-one in town. But, they do be saying, that the girl he was engaged to jilted him; and he's never been the same man since. He is just as good, though. I see him going to communion every week. He is kind and nice and gentle, but his high spirits are all gone."

"I should like to meet him," said Isobel sympathetically. "He must be a very beautiful character. People who grow kind and gentle under great suffering are worth meeting."

"You've been kinder and gentler since mamma died, Isobel," put in little Marie, catching her sister's hand, and drawing it to her breast.

"Dear heart!" cried Mrs. Downing, while Isobel, to conceal her emotion, hid her face in embracing the little girl; "dear heart! what pretty things she do say."

"Suppose we go in the parlor, and have some music," suggested Isobel, desirous of changing the subject.



"After the manner of Sousa."

"It's just what I was going to ask," cried Mrs. Downing, clapping her hands. "Never since I've been in this house—and I've been here this eighteen year and more—never have I had such lovely evenings. I was born in the country, mum," she added, addressing herself to Isobel; "and I used to love to be waked up in the early spring mornings by the songs of the birds. Ah! indeed, it's one of the nicest things I remember. And when you and the little ones get to singing after supper, it's like enchantment. I hear the little birds, and I am a little girl again. And I see my mother feeding the chickens in the yard, and my father going out with the horses. And I see my brothers and sisters—they're all dead save one sister—God rest their souls!—and I hear them laughing and talking; but above all I hear the pretty birds singing their prettiest right among the apples and peach blossoms and it's all so lovely."

Philip, Marie and Charlie had not waited to listen to this address. They had already danced into the parlor, and were busy getting the music for the occasion.

Charlie, the baby of the family, did not think good, on such occasions, to sing along with the others. Now and then, indeed, he would contribute for a short phrase or passage the music of his voice, always with great complacency, as though he realized that his help made distinctly for the success of that particular measure. But, while he was not singing, it should not be inferred that he was idle. O, no! Armed with an ebony baton, once, it was said, the property of his father, Master Charlie would beat the time with all the airs and graces of Mr. Philip Sousa—whom, by the

way, he had watched closely and admiringly on five several occasions.

When Isobel entered a hot dispute was raging.

"We're going to sing Bishop's 'Hunting Song,'" asserted Philip.

"No, we're not," contradicted Marie. "We're going to have 'Sunrise'—where you bring in the song of the birds."

"You always want to have your own way," growled Philip. "I never saw such a girl as you, Marie."

"I fink we better sing the 'Mocker Bird,' and let Philip play he's a Mocker Bird," put in the very small boy, giving Philip and Marie, with perfect impartiality, a light poke in the ribs with his baton.

"You just keep out of this, Charlie," said Marie, loftily. "'Little children should be seen and not heard.' It isn't right for us to be fussing."

"You began the scrapping yourself," retorted Philip.

"I didn't."

"You did."

"Both of you began it," asserted the small director.

"Well, well, dears," said Isobel gently, but with authority, "quarreling again? Marie, you should try to be a lady. Ladies do not raise their voices and talk sharply. And, besides, you're the oldest. You must set a good example. What's the trouble?"

Marie explained at length. While she was speaking, one of the windows facing on Sycamore Street rattled in the sash.

"Halloa! what's that?" exclaimed Philip, running to the window. "O, Isobel," he cried, jumping back suddenly, "come quick! There's a man at the window."

Isobel was at his side in an instant, and together they peered out into the darkness.

"Why, Philip, I see nothing."

"Neither do I *now*," said the boy. "But I saw a man's face there just now."

"Are you sure, dear?"

"Well, I *think* I did."

The window through which they were straining their eyes looked out upon a tiny lawn which sloped down for a length of twelve or fifteen feet to the sidewalk. There was no fence, and so, Isobel reflected, it was not improbable that some passer-by, attracted by the pretty sound of children's voices, had taken the liberty of looking in. And yet it was not an auspicious night for the gratification of people who peep. The snow was still falling heavily, and the ground was covered by a white coat several inches thick. From Grand Avenue—just one square beyond—came occasionally the silvery jingle of sleigh-bells—sweet punctuation marks which gave agreeable pauses to the snowy silence of the night.

"Well, Philip, it really doesn't matter much. Only I hope that if there was a man there he didn't hear you talking rudely to your sister. What would mamma have said, if she heard you?"

Philip hung his head.

"Let's sing the song Marie proposed," he suggested, softly.

"And then, Phil, we can sing yours, too," added Marie, radiantly.

"We'll sing all free," piped the director. And as he said, so was it to be done.

Mrs. Downing, while all this was going on, had slipped into the kitchen and given a hurried message to her maid of all work; who, throwing a shawl about her head, went out into the night to give notice to some of the neighbors that there was to be a strictly private parlor concert, and that, provided they made no noise and gave the Lachances no hint of their presence, they were welcome to attend.

Before the first of these invited guests had stolen softly into the dining-room—where the lights had been discreetly lowered—a pretty tableau was formed in the parlor.

Isobel took her place at the piano, her stool turned somewhat toward the left, where, facing her with a pair of spectacles on his little nose, after the manner of Sousa (the glasses were plain), stood Charlie, his legs wide apart, the baton high in the air and the free hand raised to command attention. Charlie was persuaded that the singing would come to little or naught without his clever leadership. Philip and Marie, their hands behind their backs and standing quite erect, awaited with their eyes fastened most respectfully upon the spectacled leader.

“Sh-h!” he whispered.

Down came the baton, and forthwith Isobel played the lively prelude which introduces Bishop’s “Hunting Song.”

It was remarkable how accurately the little fellow beat the time; more remarkable still, how each move and gesture of his body gave interpretation to the spirit of every phrase.

A portentous nod with a great flourish of hand and baton sent the two children facing him into the melody. Philip carried the air, Marie the alto part, while Isobel, as she accompanied, filled in with rich and rare low notes. As

the director of some orchestra is content, for the most part, to allow the musicians under him to do the instrumental work, but at times, especially in the fortissimo passages, takes up his instrument and lends a powerful note to the volume of sweet sound, so Charlie, silent, yet inspiring, dumb, yet expressive, would now and then, when the passages grew stronger, break into a childish treble, and add what he certainly considered a new beauty to the rare sweetness of the three voices.

Truly, they were indeed a "nest of nightingales."

"You directed the song excellently," said Isobel at the end.

"Didn't I?" cried the young director, removing his glasses, and bowing toward the dining-room to his imaginary audience - not quite so imaginary as he supposed. "I'll do better in the next. Philip, when I shut my eyes it's a sign that you sing soft."

"All right, Mr. Director," said Philip, meekly.

"And Marie, keep still when you sing. Only the director moves."

"Yes, Mr. Director."

Charlie resumed his glasses, beat with his baton upon the piano for attention, and, having satisfied himself that all were in position, motioned them into "Sunrise."

The nightingales did not follow the score as it stood printed. When they came to the part—

"Merry, joyous birds,
Happy, joyous birds,
Sing their sweetest lay,
To usher in the day,"

Philip, abandoning the air to the director, began to trill and quaver in his highest register with such art that, despite the



"Philip, not without reason, admires himself."

snow that was falling and the wind that was wailing, the listeners were transported to the lands where snow and ice

and all things bleak are unimaginable. For the moment, and out of its time, sweet spring had come again.

The audience within, unable to contain itself when the song died away, broke into applause.

The nightingales were startled, and Isobel jumped from her piano-stool, and there is no knowing what interval of awkwardness would not have ensued, had not an unexpected diversion wholly changed the situation.

"Look!" cried a man, bursting from the dining-room and pointing toward the window.

Quick as thought, Isobel, who was still meditating on the previous apparition, turned, and, for the briefest imaginable time, saw a face against the pane. At the moment a sleigh was passing the house; and its lighted lanterns brought out the face in bold relief.

Dark glasses concealed the eyes, a heavy slouch hat came down over the forehead, and a fierce mustache and a fiercer beard lent to the expression the note of savageness. That face would give the painter an ideal anarchist. It was gone, vivid just now, then gone completely like a flash of light.

The man who had discovered the apparition reached the window a moment later, and throwing up the sash leaped out.

"Twenty years have I been here," cried Mrs. Downing, with clasped hands, "and never a thief nor a burglar came to this house till to-night."

"Did you see the face, Philip?" asked Isobel, eagerly.

"Yes; it was the face I saw just a few minutes ago."

"Strange!" she murmured.

“He looked savage, didn’t he?” pursued Philip.

“I think, dear, that his eyes were fastened on you. What a savage-looking man!”

The audience now came forward, and what with thanking Isobel for the concert, and with assuring her that there was nothing to fear, and that music such as they had listened to would bring even a Fiji Islander to the window, left the girl and the little ones quite brave and resolute after this double shock. The man who had given chase returned as the company was making its adieux; but he had nothing to tell. The owner of the strange face had disappeared, and left no trace that could be followed.

However, the adventures of that night were not yet ended. The little ones had just given Isobel the good-night kiss, and were on their way up the staircase, when the door bell rang out loudly.

Philip, Marie and Charlie, the latter of whom had been rubbing his eyes for the last quarter of an hour, became at once very wide awake, and paused on the stairs to see the outcome of the noisy ring.

Mrs. Downing opened the door. A small boy with a very white coat and a very red nose—the one color caused by the snow, the other by the cold—handed her a package.

“For Mister Philip Laplante—no charges, paid,” he said, quickly, and tore down the steps.

“For me?” cried Philip, leaping down the stairway, three steps at a time. “What is it?”

Isobel handed the package to her brother.

“Suppose you open it yourself, dear.”

How nice Isobel could be!

Philip made short work of the wrappings.

"Hurrah!" he said. "It's an overcoat. Say, Isobel, mayn't I go out, and try how it feels?"

"Suppose, dear, you try it on where you are."

Isobel assisted him into the coat, which, as it happened, fitted him perfectly, wondering the while who could have sent it.

As Philip turned to contemplate himself in the hat-rack mirror, Isobel noticed an envelope protruding from the upper left hand pocket.

"Philip," she said, "perhaps that letter in your pocket will tell you something."

The boy pulled out the letter, and scanned the superscription.

"It's got my name on it," he said. "'Philip Lachance'—and, Isobel, what's that word in the corner that begins with an 'A'?"

Isobel took the letter and read:

"MASTER PHILIP LACHANCE.

"Addressed."

"Shall I open it, dear, and read it to you?" continued Isobel.

"Please, yes, Isobel."

"Why!" she exclaimed. "Here's Mr. Dunne again! This letter is signed by Mr. John Dunne!"

"O, goodie!" cried Marie, who had already taken Mr. Dunne on faith.

"Are you listening, children?"

There could be no doubt as to the purport of their answer.

“Well, here’s the letter :

“‘MY DEAR PHILIP: I trust that your good sister Isobel will not think me impertinent in taking the liberty of sending you an overcoat. I want to give you a little gift in payment for the song you sang. No number of coats could repay you for all you did for me. That song of yours brought Christmas home to me as it never came home to me since I was a young man of twenty-one. *It gave me an idea!* That idea, I hope, will make the coming Christmas for me and my friends one of the brightest, best and holiest we have ever celebrated.

“‘Just after leaving you, a telegram called upon me to leave Milwaukee to-night on business which will keep me from the city for several days. I regret sincerely that I cannot call on your sister. If I could speak to her and show—not tell her—how I felt about that Christmas song, I know she would not be hurt at what on the face of it seems to be a bit of boldness. I hope to be allowed to see you and Miss Isobel on my return; and to be permitted at a day that is not, I trust, far off, to sign myself gratefully,
Your friend, JOHN DUNNE.’”

“May I keep the coat, Isobel?”

“It would be churlish to refuse it, Philip, in the light of that letter.”

“Hurrah!” shrilled the soprano.

While Marie and Charlie—now perfectly wide awake—were admiring Philip, who strutted proud as a peacock up and down with his head very high and his chest thrust out—there came another ring of the bell.

“Good gracious!” cried Mrs. Downing, who had con-

fined herself to interjections the past hour. "What's going to happen next?" and she threw open the door.

This time it was a man who confronted her.

"An overcoat for Mr. Philip Lachance—there are no charges."

"Hold on!" cried Isobel, darting forward. "Please tell me whom it's from and who ordered it."

"It's from Browning, King & Company. I was ordered to say that the sender wanted his name kept secret."

As the door closed upon the man, Isobel and Mrs. Downing looked at each other in speechless amazement.

"Well, I never!" gasped the elderly woman. "There's been more queer things happening here to-night than I can understand. There's that man who frightened you at the window—and Philip says he was there before. And then there's one overcoat that we can account for; and then there's another overcoat that we can't account for. Why, it's all surprises!"

"Mrs. Downing," said Isobel, in tones so low that the children could not hear her, "I am beginning to get afraid. There must be something wrong. Be sure to lock everything to-night. O, I wish I were braver!"

"Sure, you're as brave a girl as ever I saw; but you are nervous, my dear. There's no need to be frightened. Take a good sleep to-night, and to-morrow morning you will laugh at yourself for the way you feel now."

Philip, having taken off Mr. Dunne's overcoat and put on the second, now presented himself to be admired.

"It's a nice one, too," he remarked.

"Which do you want, dear?"

Philip removed his latest outer garment, and having examined it from every point of view, laid it aside. Then he returned to his first love.

"It's a nice one, too. Say, I'd like to go out and try it."

"Which do you want, dear?"

"Look!" he said, taking it off and turning the inside toward his sister. "See that blue flag?"

"Yes, dear."

"What is that reading under it?"

"The Sign of the Blue Flag."

"That's the coat for me; it comes from Mr. Dunne, and is the color of the Blessed Virgin."

Isobel but a moment before had been strangely apprehensive for the boy, but now she plucked up fresh heart of grace.

"The Blessed Mother," she thought, "will not suffer her little child to fall into any real danger."

CHAPTER X.

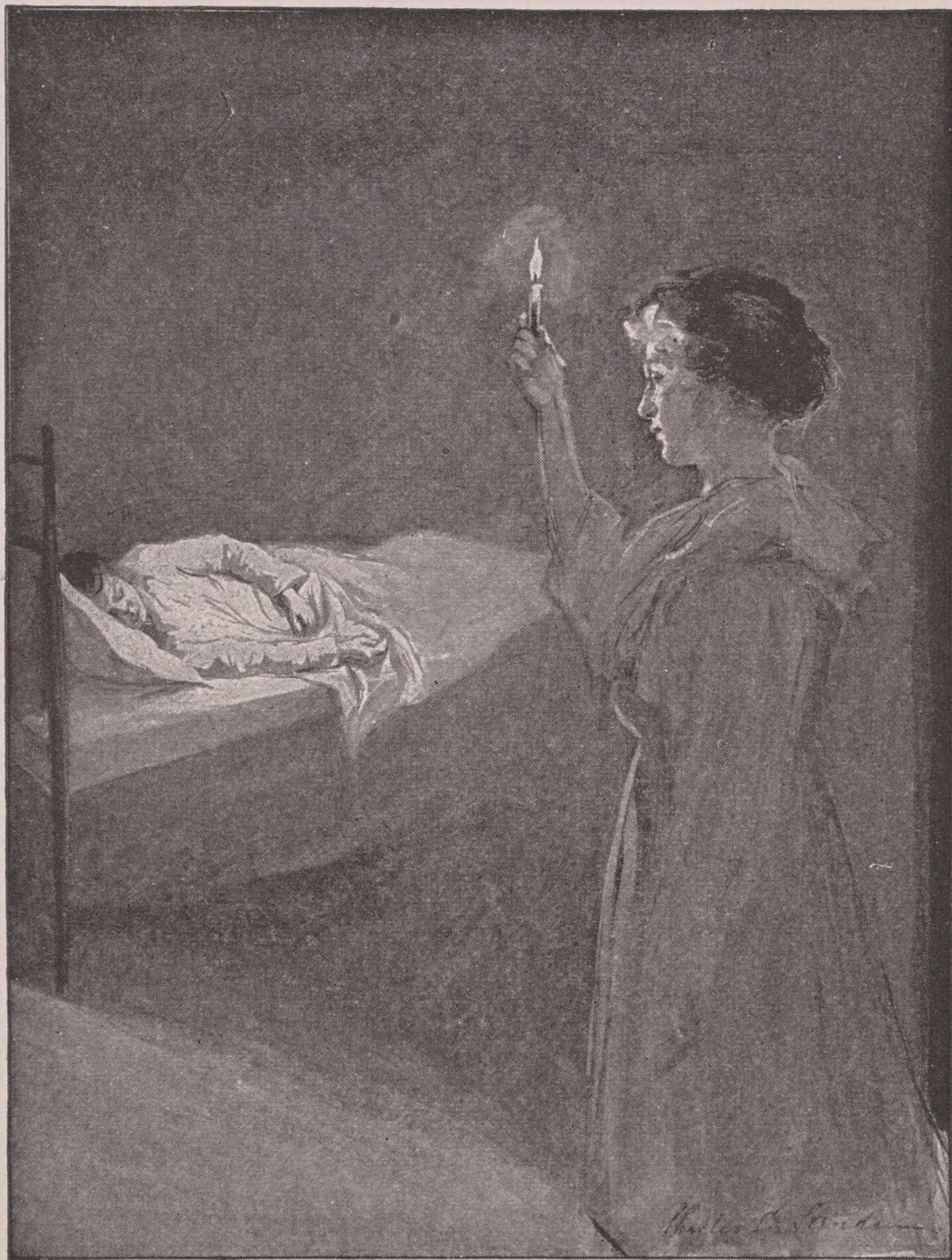
ISOBEL'S HOUR OF DESOLATION.

DURING the night Isobel slept but little. The face at the window, the strange, wild, troubled face, with the eyes fixed apparently upon Philip, haunted her. Then, what could be the meaning of that second overcoat? The first was accounted for; but in the whole city of Milwaukee who could there be sufficiently interested in her little Philip to order him a coat from Browning, King & Company? And why should the donor be at the pains of keeping himself anonymous? For the first time in her life Isobel experienced an uneasiness, a fear of the mysterious unknown. It was not for herself she was anxious, but for Philip.

Repeatedly did she go back over all the incidents of the earlier part of the afternoon, trying to fit them together, and to piece out their connection with the mysterious apparition at the window, and the no less mysterious gift of the overcoat.

Philip's singing had attracted a crowd. Out of that crowd, one was accounted for—Mr. John Dunne. Could he who appeared at the window have been a member of that improvised audience also? And if so, what did he want? Could the face at the window have had any connection with the sending of the second overcoat? Think and puzzle as she might, Isobel found no answer to these questions.

But of one thing she felt sure—not through any process of reasoning, it was rather an intuition—she felt sure that Philip was being watched. And with this, it came home to



"Philip was lying quite still."

her as it had not before, that she was a poor defenceless girl, alone, in a strange city, with no one to give her counsel, with no one to help and protect her in the hour of need.

She began to reproach herself for having left New York, where she was known and loved. It was borne in upon her in the silent watches of that long, long night, that she had done a foolish thing. Some danger—the more to be dreaded that it was unknown—was hovering near; poverty was coming on apace. O, to be back in New York! O, to be near Professor Himmelstein! She had nearly broken the old man's heart. In her pride, she had refused to listen to him. And now he was gone, perhaps forever. Between him and her lay a great dividing water. Yes, of deliberate purpose, she had cut the children away from their truest, loyalest friend.

A keen homesickness, a great loneliness, a bitter agony swept over the soul of Isobel. Perhaps Philip was even now in danger? She hurried noiselessly into his room—dreading almost to look toward his bed, lest she should find it empty. She gave a little gasp of relief when she found her fears belied. Philip was lying quite still and serene, breathing softly, his little arms outspread over the coverlet.

The room was quite cool, and Isobel gently covered his hands and arms. How she loved her little brother! The thought of impending danger weighed heavily upon her heart. She was in an agony. In moments of desolation we become our severest critics. We give ourselves no quarter. Isobel had come to such a moment. She felt, as she bent over her little Philip, that from the day of her mother's illness to the present hour, all her actions had been ill-considered and foolish. Trouble, difficulty, disaster were now impending. The thorns were pressing

about her brows, thorns which she herself had platted. In that moment of bitterness the poor girl was tempted to wish that it was all over, that life with its dangers and trials were swallowed up in death. It was a moment of weakness; and she at once recognized it as such. She tried to struggle, but feeling and nature fought stubbornly. In the heart of the conflict, her eyes fell upon Philip. Then, at once, another wave rushed over her soul—the wave of sisterly love; she stooped and imprinted a fervent kiss upon the brow of the sleeping child.

Philip moved uneasily, shifted his position, gave a little hem, as though to clear his throat, then he sang forth sweetly, clearly :

“Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices.”

And Isobel fell upon her knees, and prayed fervently. It was, indeed, as though she had heard angel voices; for fear and doubt had gone, and the peace of God had returned to her and filled her soul with faith and confidence and trust.

Dawn was breaking before she arose from her knees. She had passed a sleepless night, but she had no regrets for the loss; for again she had heard the angels calling, and their message was “too pure for the touch of a word.”

CHAPTER XI.

A MORNING WALK WITH SURPRISING RESULTS, WHICH, AS THE READER SHALL PRESENTLY LEARN, HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH THE FATES AND FORTUNES OF THE LACHANCES.

AT breakfast on the following morning Isobel showed the effects of her vigil. She looked paler than usual and there was a weariness in her eyes. During the meal, she devoted herself to caring for the wants of Philip, Marie, and Charlie. They failed to notice that beyond a cup of coffee and a cracker she took nothing herself.

"Isobel, what are you going to do this morning?" asked Philip, as he arose from the table.

"I haven't quite made up my mind, dear. Suppose we take a walk as far as the Gesu, and hear Mass?"

"And after that, will you go for a walk on Grand Avenue?" asked the boy eagerly.

Isobel hesitated before answering. She felt very weak and tired, and the prospect of a walk was anything but inviting. Had she consulted her own feelings, she would have said no at once. But she had regard to the boy's eager face and bright eyes.

"I can wear my new overcoat, you know," persisted Philip.

"Yes, Isobel, do go," put in Marie, who, with all the airs of a matron, was filling a cup of coffee for the youngest member of the family. "I think it will do you good, Isobel. You don't look well: Mrs. Downing just told me

that she was afraid you were going to be ill. Charlie and I can keep house—can't we, Charlie?"

"You bet we tan."

"And you'll promise to be good, Charlie?" asked Isobel.

"Tross my heart. I'll do just what Marie says."

"Very well, then! Philip, get your overcoat."

It was a bright morning. The air was clear and cold; and the sun shining upon the newly fallen snow dotted the white streets with millions of diamond points. Philip revelled in the snow and the sunshine. He was supposed to walk with Isobel. As a matter of fact, in the joy of health and spirits and a bracing atmosphere, he ran forward and backward and all around her.

"Now, Philip, give me your hand," called Isobel, as they drew near the magnificent church. "Don't forget, my dear, to pray hard during the Mass for my intention. I need prayers very much."

"You need prayers!" echoed the boy incredulously. "What do you need prayers for? You're good, Isobel; and it isn't the good that need prayers, but the bad people, and people in trouble. You're not in any trouble, are you?"

Isobel smiled. The boy failed to notice how wan her face had become.

"Pray for me anyhow, Philip," she said. "I am not in trouble now, dear; but I am afraid that it may come."

They entered the church, just as the priest, vested for Mass, came out from the sacristy. The girl knelt during the entire service. Philip watched her, first curiously, then

with a feeling of uneasiness. He noticed that her face was sad and troubled. How earnestly she prayed! With her eyes turned upon the altar, she made not the slightest motion, moved neither head nor hand till all was over.

"If Isobel isn't a saint," commented Philip to himself, "then I give up."

"What were you praying for, Isobel?" he asked, as they left the church.

"For you, dear, and Marie and Charlie."

"You didn't look very well, Isobel. I was watching you."

"But now, Phil, I feel much better; I always feel better after hearing Mass. Now, which way shall we go?"

"Go? Why, away out on Grand Avenue," cried the boy, with dancing eyes, and making the widest of gestures with his arms.

"Very well, dear. Perhaps we had better not go far. I feel tired, though I have done nothing to make me feel that way."

"You're walking slow, Isobel," the boy said a moment later, as they passed Twelfth Street.

"Am I? Perhaps you are walking fast, dear." And Isobel quickened her steps.

The morning was still young, and Grand Avenue was not yet bright and gay with its long double line of sleighing parties, which, on a winter's afternoon when snow is plentiful, make it a scene of life and splendor such as no one fortunate enough to witness it shall ever forget. But the Avenue was not deserted. Snow birds were hopping and reveling about the streets with the air of proprietors.

Men and youngsters were shoveling snow from the sidewalks, and little boys and girls were making their way to school, if not unwillingly, certainly at the slowest of rates. An occasional ball flew through the air, and gay laughter, the laughter of silvery trebles, rippled and played till it was taken up by the jingling music of some passing sleigh.

“O look!” cried Philip, as they neared Thirteenth Street, “here come two Sisters.”

Slowly and modestly the two figures in black robes and veils were coming toward our two friends. Isobel raised her eyes, and, at the very first glance, her heart, she knew not why, leaped. She was fascinated. Never for a moment as they advanced toward her did she take her eyes away from the two Sisters.

As they drew near, Isobel had an opportunity of studying their appearance. One of them was very young. Her face gave the impression of a girl masquerading as a Nun. Her eyes, it is true, were cast down, not to be seen; her modesty was fairly faultless. But, for all that, no veiling of eyes and folding of hands could take from her regular features an expression of fun and mischief. Any one could see that the expression of perfect gravity now on her features would on the least provocation melt away in smiles and laughter.

The other Sister, though a trifle older, had a girlish appearance too. Certain years of her life had failed to tax the lines of her face, and though more serious, she looked as young as her companion. Her countenance was very grave and sweet. She looked like one who had suffered

and would suffer much because her feelings were tender to an exquisite excess.

Their eyes, when not cast down, wandered neither to right nor to left. They appeared to see nothing; though, truth compels me to state, very little escaped the sharp attention of the younger of the two.

"Look at that little boy and the girl, Sister Mary Agnes," she said to the other. "They are a fine pair. I dare say that girl is very refined. I wonder who they are? One thing is sure, they are Catholics, and they have just come from church."

"Mind-reading again, Sister Mary Cecilia," commented the other with a little smile. "How do you know they have just been to church? Surely, you did not see them coming out; and it's not written on their foreheads."

"No; it is not written on their foreheads, Sister; but it is written on the knees of the young gentleman's knickerbockers. He has been kneeling, and he doesn't care who knows it. Sister, Sister, why don't you look at that girl? What a tragic face she has! Do you know, I like her face. She looks so sad, though, poor thing; and her color is very poor, and her eyes are tired. If she were going to our Academy, I'd have her laughing all the time."

"The boy doesn't look troubled, though," Sister Mary Agnes observed. "He has such a joyous, friendly, open little face. I like that kind of expression. People with eyes full and open and friendly like his are incapable of telling a lie. He would do very well for our class of little boys."

"I take no interest in boys," said sister Mary Cecilia, making the remark in tones so sweet and gracious as to

deprive her words of all meaning. "If he did come, I'd soon tease him out of his air of serenity. Little boys are always so perfectly satisfied with themselves."

"Notice how intently the girl is looking at us," whispered Sister Mary Agnes.

Isobel and Philip were now within a few paces of the nuns. The girl's eyes were fixed respectfully, modestly, and with some hidden meaning upon the face of Sister Mary Agnes. Her lips were parted slightly as though she would speak, and the weariness in her eyes had suddenly given place to a singular look of inquiry. In a word, Isobel's face spoke, though the message was enigmatic. Sister Mary Agnes raised her eyes, and was awaiting momentarily for the words which were to come. But Isobel closed her lips and contented herself with bowing her head, while Philip, smiling largely, took off his hat with a great flourish; in answer to which salutations, the Sisters bowed and passed on.

"I wish I had a bit of candy with me," remarked Sister Mary Cecelia, with pleasant visions of the mighty hat flourish and the far-spreading smile. "I hate to pass a nice Catholic little boy without making him feel that it's worth while meeting a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary." She gave the full title of her Sisterhood with much unction.

"Dear, dear!" cried the other in a gentle plaint. "I wish I had spoken to that girl. She looked at us so wistfully. I'm sure she wanted to speak to us and that her courage failed her. Poor child! Even though she didn't say one word, my heart bled for her. Sister Mary Cecelia,

don't you think we ought to turn back and speak to her? She looked so sick and worn. Tell me, Sister, what shall we do?"

"She did look sick. Her face was like the snow. But you are the superioress. If I were in your place——"

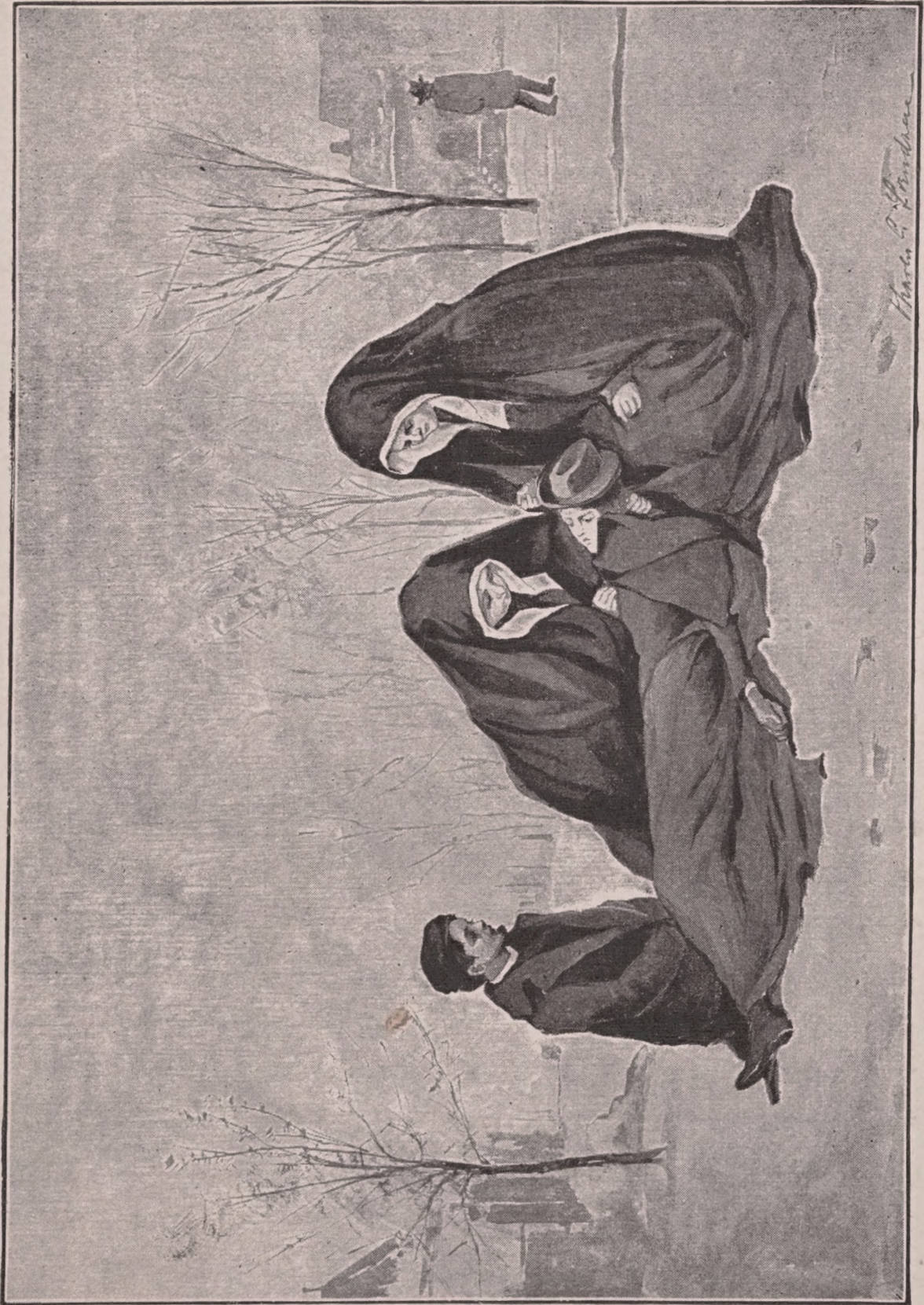
"And I wish you were," interpolated the other.

"I would go back and ask her whether we could do anything for her, or something of the sort."

"Dear, dear! I wish we could give her something!" said the superioress. "The only time I feel the vow of poverty and its effects is when I see people in distress. Well, Sister, suppose——"

She stopped suddenly. A clear shriek cut the air—a shriek of terror. They turned at once and beheld a strange tableau.

At the southeast corner of Fourteenth and Grand Avenue, Isobel lay prostrate on the sidewalk. Philip had fallen upon his knees beside her, and while wringing his hands was weeping bitterly. Just behind the two stood a man, with black spectacles, a heavy beard, and a slouch hat drawn over his forehead. His face was working convulsively, and he was motioning frantically to the Sisters to come to the girl's aid. On their moving forward hastily, the man turned and ran down Fifteenth Street as though he had committed some crime. Bestowing no attention on the strange man, Sister Mary Agnes hurried to the side of the girl, who lay with her face, snow upon snow, turned to the December sky. Placing the wan, beautiful head in the hollow of her arm, she loosened the collar with the help of Sister Mary Cecelia.



“The Sisters come to Isobel’s assistance.”

"Is she dead?" wailed Philip, whose face, from its expression of perfect contentment, had grown very tender and fearful. Love and terror were writ upon every lineament.

"Did that man say anything to this girl?" asked Sister Cecelia, catching the boy's hand.

"What man?" Philip ceased weeping and stared about in every direction.

"Didn't you see him? When we turned there was a man standing behind you two, with a great rough beard, and a big-brimmed hat."

"Was he here? No; we didn't see him now, but I guess he's the man we saw last night at our window. My sister Isobel just fell over after you passed us without saying a word."

"Sister Cecelia, help me lift her up," said the superior-ess. "And, little boy, run across the street to that corner. There's a young man coming with a sleigh. Ask him to come across."

Before Philip could execute his message, the driver of the sleigh, seeing what had happened, drove briskly across the street.

"Sisters, can I do anything?" he said, lifting his hat.

"Yes, sir," said Sister Mary Agnes. "If you please, bring this girl around to Twelfth and Cedar - the Holy Angels' Academy. I will go with you, and Sister Cecelia will walk there with the boy."

Before a crowd could gather, Isobel was helped into the sleigh, and whirled rapidly to the Academy, which, fortunately, was distant but a few squares.

When Isobel came to herself, she was lying on an improvised lounge in the Academy parlor. It was a fine room, but very plainly furnished. At the moment, however, Isobel took no note of its appointments. Her eyes rested on the face that was bending over her with an expression at once tender and anxious. It was the face which had so fascinated her, the face of the superioress.

"Is it a dream?" she asked languidly.

"No, my dear; you fainted on the street, and I had you brought here."

Isobel rose quickly to a sitting posture with alarm on her countenance.

"Philip! where is Philip?" Even as she spoke she fell back again exhausted.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear. He is on his way here now with the Sister who was walking with me."

"Thank God!" sighed the girl, the alarm leaving her face at once. Another Sister entered just then with a bowl of beef-tea.

"Now, my dear," said the superioress, "do as I bid you: drink this."

"How kind you are, Sister. Thank you so much."

"Not at all. I thank God who sent you in my way. I hope to do more for you, if you will let me. I was so sorry that I did not speak to you when I met you on the street. I felt sure that you wished to say something to me."

"I did, Sister; I felt so ill and wretched, and I was so troubled about the future. And then I saw you and the other Sister coming, and you looked like old friends to me. When you came nearer, I saw your faces, and there was no

trouble and no care upon them. O Sister, how happy you did look ! Do you always look so happy, Sister ? ”

“ No, dear, not always ; because sometimes I forget to be grateful to God for all His goodness. But that is the way I should look all the time. ”

“ Well, Sister, I felt in your presence then as though we had been friends for years, and I did so want to speak to you. ”

“ My name, my dear, in religion is Sister Mary Agnes, ”

“ And I am Isobel Lachance. ”

The door-bell rang.

“ Excuse me one moment ; I think that must be your brother. ” And the good Sister left the room.

Isobel lay back and closed her eyes. Consolation had come again, suddenly, unexpectedly. Her heart had warmed at once to Sister Mary Agnes and to Sister Mary Cecilia. On meeting them, she felt that here were the Sisters after her own heart. It was a case of love at first sight. Again, in the one delicious moment, before she fell unconscious to the ground, again, she had heard the angel voices calling.

She opened her eyes, and gazed about the room.

“ It looks to me like home, ” she murmured.

At that moment, Philip, accompanied by the two Sisters, entered. Down, with a suddenness that was startling, crumbled her vision. Not for her the convent walls, the prayers, the daily round of great heroism in little things, not for her the consecrated life which is more than poet's dream. The care of Philip, of Marie and of Charlie was her vocation.

When ten minutes later they were leaving, Isobel paused at the door. Somehow she could not let go of the gentle hand clasped so warmly in her own.

“Sister Mary Agnes, I feel like the peri at the gate of heaven. I have looked within, and seen the light and the glory; but I must stay without. It is not for me. Good-by, good-by.”

“Don’t forget us, Isobel,” said the Sister, in a voice strangely soft and with a gentle pressure. She understood Isobel’s story by intuition.

“Forget! That is impossible. I almost wish I could.”

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH SOME VERY PLEASANT CHARACTERS MAKE THEIR APPEARANCE, AND THE DAY, BEGUN SO SADLY, IS USHERED OUT TO THE MERRY JINGLE OF SLEIGH-BELLS AND THE HAPPY LAUGHTER OF JOYOUS YOUTH.

THE cause of Isobel's fainting on Grand Avenue is not far to seek. The burden of responsibility, laid so suddenly upon her shoulders, had borne down upon her too heavily. After all, she was but a girl, and previously to the time of her mother's fatal illness, she had, while facing the sordid cares of life, some one to lean upon. When the burden became too great then, she could shift it to other and stronger shoulders. But now it was so different! No wonder that the girl faltered and staggered, no wonder that her nights were sleepless and her days were gray; black care had planted his standard in her heart. Thus far her only consolation she had found in her religion. Prayer had given her strength; but it had not and could not give her the wisdom which comes with many years and with much experience. She needed a friend. She needed a director; and it was the want of such a guide and counsellor that strained her anxiety, at this time, almost to the snapping point.

Isobel was by nature of a reticent disposition. She found difficulty in unbosoming herself even to those whom she knew and loved. It was "the grief that does not

“speak” which, together with watching and fasting, had been the cause of her fainting on Grand Avenue.

“Isobel,” said Philip early that afternoon, “I believe that man was following us.”

“What man, Philip?” asked the girl anxiously.

She was leaning back in an easy chair, a little touch of color in her face, but still looking very weak and worn.



“The coming Sousa amuses himself.”

“Why, the man we saw at the window last night.”

“Did you see him again, Philip?” cried the girl, sitting upright and going suddenly pale.

“No, I didn’t; but the Sisters did. When you fell on the street, he came up behind us; and then, when the

Sisters turned round, he made gestures for them to come to your help, and then he ran away."

"But how do they know it was that man?"

"O, they don't know; but they told me about his dark glasses, and the beard and the slouch hat. Perhaps he's an Italian brigand. Do you think he's a brigand, Isobel?"

"I don't know what to think, my dear. Philip, would you like to go back to New York?"

"I'm willing," answered the boy indifferently.

"Here's a letter for you, miss," announced Mrs. Downing, appearing at the open door.

"Hurrah!" cried the boy, running to get it; "and," he added, as he glanced at the postmark, "it's from New York. Here, Isobel, read it quick, and tell us what's the news from home. Marie! Charlie!" he piped, running into the hallway, "come up quick. There's a letter from New York!"

While Philip was thus holding forth, and while, with screams and other manifestations of delight, Marie and Charlie came tripping up the stairs, Isobel had opened the envelope, and was eagerly reading its contents.

"It's from Sister Juliana, my dears," she said. "Excuse me one moment till I read it."

Amidst much dumb show on the part of the children, Isobel, read the following:

"ST. HELENA'S ACADEMY, NEW YORK,
December 16, 189—.

"MY DEAREST ISOBEL:—Busy as I am with the cares of a great school and a sufficiently large community, I can not, can not banish from my memory my dear little girl

alone in a strange city. 'Little girl' do I say? Ah, my dear Isobel, though you are grown quite tall, and become quite womanly, I see you ever as the little one whom I prepared for her first holy communion—a little girl with bright, eager eyes, a little girl who worked so hard to prepare worthily for the first coming into her heart of the loving Master, and who could never be satisfied to think that she had done anything like half enough. When you made your first holy communion, dear, I watched you, and even as I watched I felt that God had some special designs in your regard. I have never changed in my opinion, and I doubt not that in His own wonderful way God will order all things for your good. 'To them that love God all things work together unto good.'

"And now, dear Isobel, thinking of you—night and day—thinking of my dear little first communion girl, I feel instinctively that your days of suffering and trial are upon you. Knowing your tender heart, knowing, in a measure at least, your fine and delicate conscience, understanding your present condition, I am sure that you are more lonely, more distressed, more desolate than you care to admit.

"Well, my dear, take the advice of an old Sister who loves you very much. If thus far you have found no work that would make it worth your while remaining in Milwaukee, then please, please, return *at once* to New York.

"You have obeyed your mother's last request: you have gone to Milwaukee, as she directed. But she did not tell you to stay in Milwaukee. God will reward you for your obedience in going thither. You have obeyed. But

will God be pleased with your staying? You owe it to dear little Philip and Marie and Charlie to be prudent. Now, if you return to New York, I have still a place open for you—ten pupils, at least.

“If you are short of money, my dear, telegraph me for what you want; you can repay the money at your leisure. Be assured that a warm welcome awaits you and yours. We are all praying for you; and some of us are praying in particular that you may soon be with us again.

“Poor Professor Himmelstein came to see us the day before he took the steamer for Germany. He talked of nothing but Philip. The old man was very dejected and noticeably absent-minded. He says he does not know whether he shall ever return or not.

“My dear, if you want to gladden very much an old nun’s heart, send me word that you are coming. I wish to see once more your face, and clasp your dear hand and hear your voice ringing in my ears before I sing my *nunc dimittis*. I do not say anything about Christmas, because I hope to see you face to face very soon.

“Yours with much love,

“SISTER JULIANA.”

“It’s good news! I know it!” said Marie, as Isobel laid the letter on the table beside her. She had been watching Isobel’s face during the reading, and had noticed rich waves of red passing over the transparency of the cheeks, and a returning brightness in the half-closed eyes.

“Well, my dears, are you all ready to go back to New York?”

“I am,” said Philip.

"I'll be glad to go wherever you go," added Marie, nestling up to her sister.

"I want to do back. Dis place isn't big enough for me," said the youthful musical director.

"Well, then, we shall start for New York to-morrow afternoon."

Charlie at once got a chair and proceeded to play "choo-choo." The eyes of Marie shone with delight. Philip was pleased, but not particularly demonstrative.

"Wasn't it a waste of money to come here?" asked Marie.

"I think not, Marie. We did it for the sake of our dear mother. We are not wasteful when we are obedient."

"There's a girl to see you in the parlor, Miss Isobel," said Mrs. Downing, looking in at the door.

She waited till Isobel came out; then added in a low voice:

"It's Miss Jennie Hume; she's a Holy Angels' girl, and her father is one of the leading Catholics of the city."

On entering the parlor, Isobel found herself facing a girl full grown, but somewhat below the middle size. She had a healthy, somewhat ruddy complexion, and very pleasing hazel eyes. Her expression was singularly open and cordial.

"Please don't think me impertinent, Miss Lachance," she began, with an engaging smile. "Sister Mary Agnes was telling me about you, and how you were a stranger in the city. My name is Jennie Hume."

"Indeed, it is very kind of you to come and see me," said Isobel, taking her hand. "Please call me Isobel, and I'll call you Jennie. Sit down, Jennie."

"You see," continued the girl, "Sister Mary Agnes has taken a great liking to you ; and I always like any one that Sister Mary Agnes likes. If you had heard her talking about you, Isobel, your ears would have burned."

"I'm so glad she likes me," said Isobel with genuine enthusiasm. "When I saw her, I felt that I was meeting an old friend. What a lovely life she leads !"

"How do you know that?"

"O, it's written on her face."

"She is just lovely," admitted the visitor, "but I don't see anything very lovely in her life. Ugh ! to live in a sort of prison all the time – to get up early and go to bed early ! I love Sister Mary Agnes, but I do not like her life."

"‘Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage,’" quoted Isobel, smiling.

"I suppose it's all a matter of vocation," said Jennie.

"No doubt. After all, it's only the yoke of Christ, and that yoke is sweet, and that burden light."

"I wish I was more religious," sighed the girl. Almost at once she broke into a radiant smile. "Anyhow, my brother is. He's as good as any boy could be—I mean, my older brother. My younger brother is outside in the sleigh."

"But it's cold ; hadn't we better bring him in?"

"O, please don't think of such a thing. He is bashful to a fault ; and not only regards girls as evils, but even thinks they are entirely unnecessary. He's only twelve, though, and will doubtless change his mind. I know a good many boys that have."



“Three little girls from school.”

"Your converts, I suppose," said Isobel, with the first gleam of mirth in her eye.

The two girls were still laughing when Mrs. Downing ushered into the room another visitor.

"Why, Sophie!" cried Jennie. "This is a surprise. It's jolly of you to have come. Isobel, this is Sophie Quinlan, a classmate of mine."

"I must begin by apologizing to you," Sophie began.

"No, you needn't," broke in Jennie; "or you'll make the same speech I made. Isobel knows why you've come. She's a friend of Sister Agnes's, and Sister Agnes's friends are yours."

Sophie was taller than Jennie. She had a fine oval face, shaded by a mass of rich golden hair. Her brothers disdainfully called it red; but small boys have no poetry in their souls.

"How nice of you to visit me. I feel half sorry, now, that I'm going back to New York."

"What!" cried the two in chorus, and glancing at each other with evident disappointment.

"Yes; we go to-morrow."

"It's too bad," said Jennie. "I had been studying out how to give you a nice time."

"So was I," said Sophie.

"O, that could hardly be in any case," said Isobel. "You are girls going to school, and I—"

"But we are to be graduated this year," objected Jennie.

"Even so; I must work for a living."

"Yes; but you needn't work all the time," argued Sophie. "Perhaps it would be a good thing for me if I

had to work for a living myself. As it is, I neither work nor pray."

"She goes to Mass every morning," whispered Jennie in Isobel's ear.

At this moment there came the sound of voices from the hall.

"My name is Philip," they heard as they paused instinctively to listen, "Philip Lachance."

Jennie gave a little gasp and a perceptible start.

"I've heard that voice before," she said.

"My sister's name," continued the same voice, "is Isobel; and she's the nicest girl I ever saw; and I lived in New York, where there's no end of girls; come right in, Miss Ronayne, and I'll introduce you."

"Good lands!" exclaimed Sophie, "if it isn't Edna Ronayne."

And Edna Ronayne it was, a girl of seventeen, tall and stately, and quite at home with Master Philip, who led her by the hand into the room.

While this third visitor was being introduced, Jennie was staring hard at Philip.

"You needn't introduce yourself, Philip," she said, coming forward with signs of embarrassment, which puzzled her friends; for Jennie and embarrassment were seldom found together. "I've met you before, and I'm very, very glad to meet you again."

"Where did you meet me?"

" 'Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices,' "

she quoted.

"What! did you hear him singing, Jennie, when he was downtown yesterday?" asked Isobel.

"I did, Isobel, and I actually felt like falling on my knees. But I didn't."

"Do you know Mr. Dunne?" asked Philip.

"Very well; he's a great friend of our family," answered Jennie.

"He's my uncle!" said Edna, "and one of the nicest men in town."

"There was some one slipped a dollar in my pocket while I was singing," continued Philip. "Did you see any one doing it, ma'am?" and he looked full at Jennie.

Jennie's face was on fire in an instant.

"That's a fact," she said hurriedly, turning to Isobel. "I almost forgot. The afternoon is slipping away, and I was forgetting what I came for. Isobel, won't you please do me a favor?"

"Why, certainly, Jennie, if I can."

"My brother's out there with our sleigh; won't you come out for a sleigh-ride, please; you and the children? You must see something of Milwaukee before you leave town."

"Why, Jennie," put in Sophie, "that's just what I came to ask her. *Both* my brothers are out there, and two brothers are more troublesome—I mean better than one."

"Three hearts with but a single thought," said Edna. "We've all been making the same arrangements, and keeping it a secret from the other two. I've got a sleigh out there, and my cousin Tony—"

"Who is absolutely the best boy in town," put in Jennie, in a tone half serious, half playful.

“My cousin Tony is to be the charioteer. He has forgotten more about sleigh-riding than those brothers of yours know.”

Philip, during the making of these generous offers, had bolted from the room.

“Hey, there!” they could hear him bawling. “Hey,



“Our Sisters go to the Holy Angels’ Academy.”

there! Charlie! Marie! Get your things on in a rush; we’re going out for a sleigh ride.”

At once there was a great movement and noise on the stairway outside and in the room above. Had Philip shouted “fire” he could not have produced a greater commotion.

“It’s simply wonderful how much kindness there is in

the world," said Isobel. "I don't know how to thank you for your kind offer. Of course, I accept. It will be a treat to the little ones, and, of course, to me too."

"And as I was first on the ground, I claim the privilege of taking you in my sleigh," said Jennie.

"Thank you, Jennie; and Philip too. I am uneasy when he's not near me. Edna, will you take my sister Marie?"

"It will be a pleasure."

"And where do I come in?" asked Sophie with a playful smile.

"O, you're to have our musical director; Charlie is only six, but he's the coming Sousa; at least, that's what he thinks."

There was a clattering on the stairs, a whispered consultation outside, followed by the appearance of three little children, red and rosy and smiling, and bundled up for zero weather.

The girls pounced upon them at once, and there was much kissing. In view of the sleigh ride, Philip submitted with surprising grace. Marie and Charlie were delighted.

There were three sleighs in a line outside. The four occupants, who had been gaily chaffing each other, at sight of the girls relapsed into silence and stiffness. Not one of them but could have met a football rush with better grace than such a company as now came down the steps.

Paul and Leo, brothers of Sophie Quinlan, looked far into the distance (kicking each other's shins furtively the while). Tony, the tall cousin of Edna, took off his hat, bowed, blushed, then pretended to find the harness a subject

of absorbing interest; while Walter, Jennie's brother, blushingly amiable, broke into a smile which he was able to keep up for almost any length of time; and which, in connection with the tender down quite observable on either cheek, gave him the air of a glorified pussy-cat.

It was a splendid afternoon. The sleigh-ride, divided into two halves by an intermission consisting of an extemporized musicale at the home of Edna Ronayne, lasted more than three hours; and when it was over night had fallen, and the stars, glittering points in a fairy field of purple, twinkled above to the happy laughter of young people, to the happy laughter, even, of Isobel, who had been cheated out of her troubles for a time by the sweet charity of "three little girls from school."

CHAPTER XIII.

FAREWELL TO MILWAUKEE! THE "ANARCHIST" AGAIN
ATTRACTS ATTENTION.

THE day following the sleigh-ride was a busy one, and, as the sequel will show, extremely eventful. What with packing, and entertaining callers, Isobel, Marie and Philip were suffered to have no moments of leisure. Charlie, calm and unmoved in the midst of all this bustle, spent several hours at the piano, where, to use his own expression, he "improvid," which, being interpreted, signifies that he now and then discovered by much experimenting a few chords in a minor key, and beat them out slowly and solemnly to his own supreme satisfaction.

Sisters Mary Agnes and Mary Cecilia were early callers; they came bearing gifts. The superioress brought a basket packed with all manner of good things for a railway trip; while Sister Cecilia was content with loading the children with candy. She gained their hearts completely by helping them to eat of it. She had a talent for making herself at home with little folk and them at home with her; even Charlie condescended to abandon his stool at the piano, and join the laughing circle.

Not without a pang did Isobel bid these gentle Sisters farewell. She loved them, and loved their life, which, while alluring her, was barred from her by her duties toward the children.

At half-past two in the afternoon, Jennie came with her

sleigh. She was followed shortly afterward by Edna and Sophie.

"Here we are again," said Jennie, laughing and rosy from her ride in the clear, cold air. "We couldn't let you go without seeing you down to the station."

"How good and kind you all are," said Isobel. "In fact, I'm finding it hard to leave Milwaukee, because I'm leaving so much of my heart here."

"That is well," said Edna. "Who knows but it will bring you back to us? We quite grudge New York your returning there."

"Indeed, we do," added Sophie. "We Milwaukeeans are great lovers of music, and we can ill spare you and Philip and Marie."

Here Master Charlie looked darkly at Sophie.

"And as for directors," continued Sophie, unblushingly, "we have no one in town since the departure of Professor Tomlins quite up to the standard set by Charlie."

Charlie, perfectly satisfied with Sophie and himself, returned to the piano for a few last chords.

"Isobel," said Edna, drawing the girl aside, "isn't there anything I can do for you? I know, dear, from something you dropped yesterday that you are not well fixed in this world's goods. Now, don't take it amiss; but anything I can do for you, I will do most gladly. You have enough to take you comfortably to New York?"

"Plenty, Edna. I am tired of saying to myself how kind you are, but it is true. Thanks to the dearest friend we have in New York, Professor Himmelstein, we are abundantly provided with money."

"I hope I didn't hurt you by my offer," said Edna anxiously.

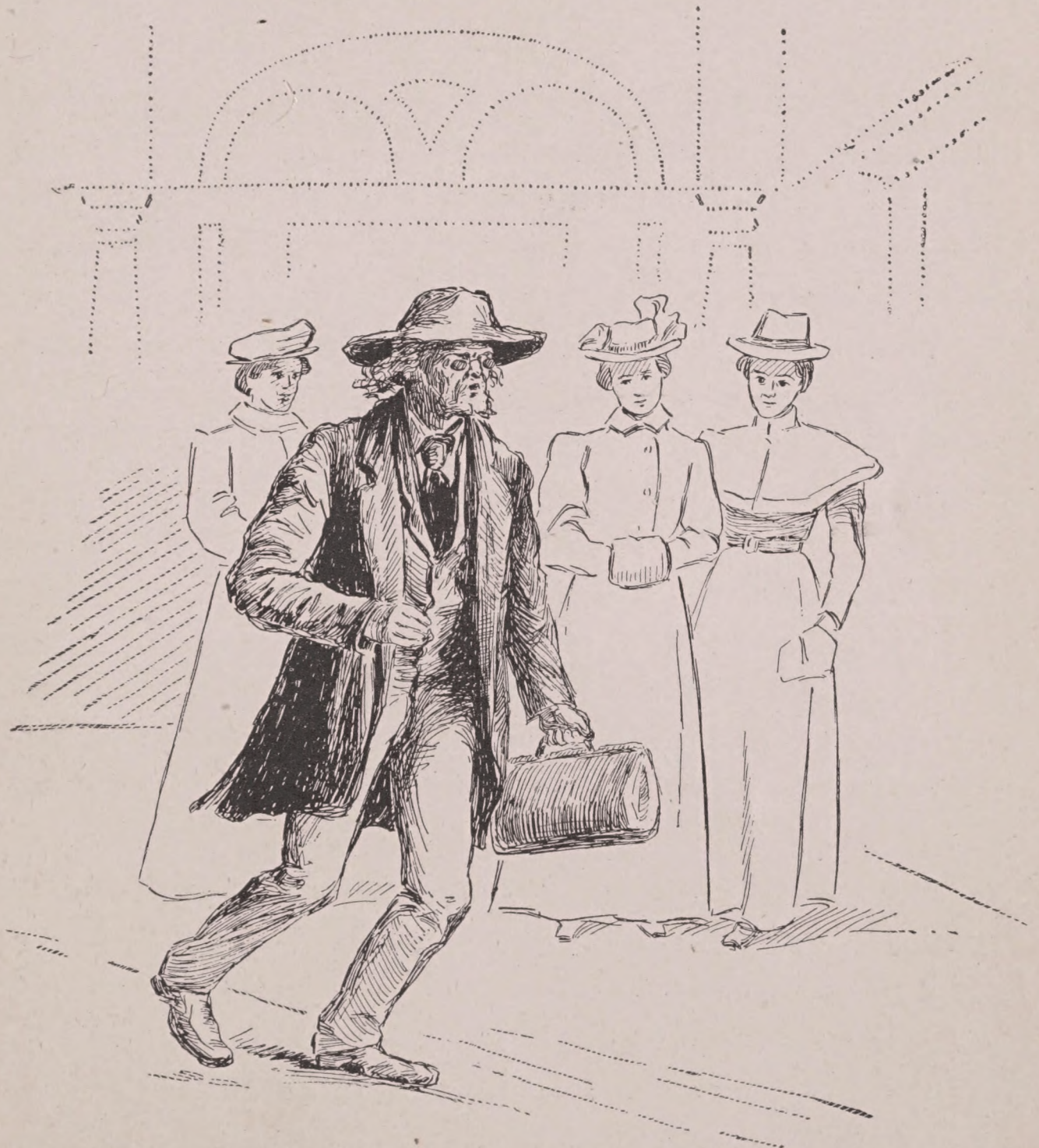
"No, no; indeed, no. It is a mystery to me how young ladies like you can be so good and kind to us poor strangers."

"You are not poor strangers," said Edna, "and we feel that you are a friend. You should hear Jennie talking of you. She is as much concerned about your leaving as though you had been living with us all your life. Last night I stayed with Jennie at her grandfather's house, and we were up till ever so late talking of you. Jennie would do anything for you; and so, for that matter, would Sophie."

"I'm sure I can't understand all the goodness we have met with since we came," said Isobel, taking Edna's hands in hers. "I never expected to meet with so much kindness. It's all a mystery."

The mystery was not impenetrable. Jennie, Edna and Sophie were pupils of the Holy Angels' Academy – a fact which goes far to explain what puzzled Isobel. Also, they were under the care and influence of Sister Mary Agnes. No wonder, then, that they were kind and gentle. Among their classmates, as Edna truly remarked, there were many, very many, who, under the same circumstances, would act in exactly the same way.

"And now, Isobel," she continued, "since I can't do a favor for you, you must do a favor for me. I want you to go to the depot in my sleigh. Tony is driving; and he was wild over your and Philip's singing yesterday evening. Tony insists on having the privilege of driving you. Now,



“ ‘Look at that funny man,’ cried Edna.”

mind, he won't say much ; but he'll be perfectly happy. Tony is the most generous-hearted boy in town."

"Very well, Edna ; it will be a pleasure to me and Philip. God bless you all."

Presently the party jingled its way to the station. The tickets were bought, the baggage checked, and after much kissing and promises to write, Isobel, Marie, Philip and Charlie passed through the gate, leaving the Milwaukee girls smiling brightly and with tears in their eyes—April faces in December.

When Isobel had settled in her place, she gazed upon Philip with a sigh of relief.

"Thank God !" she murmured. "Although my visit to Milwaukee has been a failure, we have obeyed. Now my little Philip is safe, and that wretched man who frightened us so much will not worry us again."

The bell rang, a jerk ran from car to car, and slowly the train steamed out of the station.

"*Now* I can sleep in peace," she said, with a little sob of relief. "In a few hours we shall be back again among our friends."

And she thought sorrowfully of poor old Professor Himmelstein, by this time, doubtless, far away on the broad bosom of the Atlantic.

At the same moment, Sophie, Jennie and Edna, who were ascending the steps leading into the ladies' sitting-room, were attracted by a sight which, whatever it may have seemed to the gatekeeper, was to them decidedly novel.

"Look at that funny man !" cried Edna, pointing to a

person who had just hurried down the steps at breakneck speed and was now dashing toward the gatekeeper.

“Goodness! did you ever see such a sight!” exclaimed Jennie. “He has a beard that would take a prize at an anarchist prize show.”

The man had dashed past the gatekeeper, and, before the outgoing train had fairly pulled out of the train-shed, he reached the last car and swung himself up on to the platform.

The girls laughed merrily and went away thinking no more of the incident.

Had Isobel known that this belated passenger was none other than the mysterious stranger who had so frightened her, she would not have sighed in relief, nor have congratulated herself so prematurely on their escape.

CHAPTER XIV.

PHILIP MEETS AN OLD FRIEND, AND GETS A SURPRISE WHICH
LITERALLY TAKES AWAY HIS BREATH.

THE Union Station in Chicago was brilliantly lighted. Trains were rolling in and rolling out, and passenger traffic, at that particular hour, was exceedingly brisk.

Isobel, more than usually timid in all this din and bustle, was seated with the little ones in the ladies' waiting-room. The New York train had not yet been made up, and Isobel, worn from her week of vigil and anxiety, had no desire to stir beyond the station.

Not so Philip. As the minutes wore on, he waxed more and more impatient. His restlessness showed itself in all the infinite varieties which a small boy, when he is put to it, can devise.

"Say, Isobel, can't I just take a run out of the station and take a look at Chicago?"

He had asked this question seventeen times in less than a quarter of an hour.

"Well, dear, will you be sure not to go out of sight of the station?"

"Certain sure; you needn't be afraid. I won't get lost."

"And you won't be away long?"

"Not more than five minutes."

"Very well; we shall wait for you here. Our train will be ready in a quarter of an hour—just half an hour before it starts for New York."

With a skip and a bound and a cry of joy Philip was off.

Once outside the station, he took a look about him before choosing his direction.

The electric light sputtering overhead made the street so bright that one could read a newspaper. Philip was just about to choose his course, when he uttered a subdued cry of astonishment.

Could it be? Was he dreaming? Yes, it must be true; advancing toward him with his hands clasped behind his back, and his head bowed in meditation, looking very worn and aged, was Professor Himmelstein!

Philip looked again; the man came on, unheeding, apparently, of his presence, and would have brushed by him, had not Philip caught his arm.

The Professor turned sharply, looked into the upturned face, and literally jumped.

"Ach Gott!" he cried, throwing up his hands.

"It is you—hurrah!" cried Philip.

The old man caught the boy in his arms and hugged him.

"O, but I'm glad to see you, Professor; we've all missed you so much! We talk of you every day."

"So!" cried Himmelstein, beaming.

He looked very haggard; his eyes were hollow, and his mustache, in lieu of its whilom fierceness, drooped at the ends. It had grown whiter, Philip thought.

"But, Professor, how do you come to be here? We thought you were on the way across the ocean to Germany."

"And so I was going, my leetle poy; and I had bought my ticket, and I was ready to go. And then I could not go."

“Why?”

“Because, I— I— could not leave my Philip. I thought perhaps that he may come back to New York.”

“And so I am,” said Philip joyously. “We’re all on our way now. We’re going by the next train.”

“So! How wonderful! Philip, so am I going, and we shall travel together—you and Isobel and Charlie and Marie.”

“That’s great!” cried Philip enthusiastically, “and Isobel will be just delighted to see you. She’s waiting for me in the station now. Come on, let’s go and see her.”

The Professor took out his watch.

“Ah! But thirty-five minutes, and I have not dined. If I go to see her, Philip, I will not be able to take myself away. Would you like to take supper with me?”

“Of course I should,” answered Philip promptly.

“Then go quick to Isobel, and tell her that I will take care of you; and we shall dine together, and after that we shall go to your sister on the train with me. Go quick; I will wait for you here.”

Philip departed at a run. He returned presently at the same gait, flushed and smiling.

“It’s all right, Professor. Isobel says she would trust me anywhere in your hands.”

“So!” said the Professor, in a low and dismal guttural. “Well,” he added, brightening, “we shall have a great supper.”

Himmelstein was true to his word. Philip was entertained right royally. Never had the old man been so bright, so loquacious. He poured out stories and jokes

and puzzles, till the restaurant was made gay with the laughter of one of the most charming laughers alive.

There were people there that evening who delayed over their meals to feast their ears upon the merry music which charmed the very waiters into attention.

The old man in the pauses afforded him by this laughter mopped his brow. He was perspiring freely, though the restaurant was not particularly warm.

But everything – even good stories and merry jests and a hearty appetite – comes to an end.

“Ha!” said Himmelstein, again taking out his watch and frowning at it, “it is time we go. Come, I will buy a cigar and pay the bill.”

When they issued from the restaurant, Himmelstein was puffing at an enormous Havana, which he gazed at, as he took it between each puff from his mouth, as though it were a species of explosive which might go off at any moment.

“I didn’t know you smoked, Professor.”

“I did not, till you and Isobel and Marie went away from me; and then no more I had a companion. So! and I got sick, and the doctor said to me, ‘smoke,’ and I smoke. And already the cigar is my companion.”

“Do you like it?”

“No; but it likes me. It does me good. Now, Philip,” he went on as they entered the station, “wait one moment till I get my ticket.”

Philip waited obediently. Instead of going to the ticket-office, however, Himmelstein hurried over to the telegraph stand, and having hastily scribbled a few words

on a telegraph blank, handed the operator a coin. He walked, then, with a very unsteady step, the boy noticed, to the ticket-office.

"How pale you look, Professor," said the boy, taking his hand after the purchase of the ticket.

"It is the stomach; I am not well. Philip, you and I will go first to the smoker car. I feel dizzy and I will not go with you to your sister till I feel better. So?"

"But Isobel won't know what has become of us," objected the boy.

"So? Ah, I forgot. But she shall haf word. Wait, and you will see."

They had passed through the door into the railroad shed.

"Carry your baggage, sir?" cried a boy of fifteen.

"No, my poy, but if you would earn a quarter—"

"You bet I would!"

"Pring a message to Miss Isobel Lachance: you will find her on the sleeper of the New York train that is going out in a few minutes."

"I'll find her, sir."

Himmelstein had pulled out a blank book and was already writing his note.

"DEAR ISOBEL: (he wrote)

"Phil and I are going into the smoker: and when I shall have finished the cigar for which I paid fifteen cents, and which I smoke now after meals for my health, we will return to you in the sleeper and we will talk of old times and old friends, and be very happy to be together once



Philip listens to Professor Himmelstein's recollections of the Arabian Nights.

more already. Be not anxious, I will answer for Philip. He is the apple of my eye. Your friend,

“HENRY HIMMELSTEIN.”

“There, bring that, and there is no answer. Are you sure you can find her?”

“Just as sure as she’s there.”

“So!” and Himmelstein gave the boy a quarter.

“Now, Philip,” he continued, “before we go into the smoker car, let us look at the station. Is it not large and bright? What do you think? And look at all the peoples. Is not that a band of gypsies?”

A band of gypsies it was. The glaring colors, the strange weird faces, caught Philip’s attention. Still holding the Professor’s hand, he followed them for some distance, and continued his artless survey till they had all disappeared in an emigrant car.

“Now, Philip, it is already now near the time. We will go to the smoker.”

They walked back some distance.

“So! here we are. Get in, Philip, I will show the tickets to the man.”

Philip mounted the platform, followed shortly by the Professor, and together they entered the car. There were not more than five or six occupants.

“Here, my Philip,” said the Professor, choosing a seat as far removed as possible from the other passengers, “take this place; and I will go out to see that Isobel gets my message. Do not stir till I come back in a minute.”

The old man was not quite true to his word: he was

gone for several minutes at least, and when he returned, he threw himself beside Philip.

"So!" he said with a forced smile. His face was ghastly. Putting his cigar into his mouth, he began to puff furiously.

"Say, Professor, you look as if you were on fire. What makes you smoke so hard?"

"So! Was I?" asked Himmelstein, taking the cigar out of his mouth, and looking at it sternly. "Come, I will tell you a story."

"All right," said Philip, delighted, "and make it long, too."

Himmelstein had in early years read the "Arabian Nights." Out of the scattered memories of its contents, he put together a most wonderful and incredible romance. Philip listened with dancing eyes and parted lips. He was in a land where birds laid eggs as big as elephants, where there were diamond valleys, and sleeping whales, and terrible snakes and wondrous eagles; where there were ships and shipwrecks and miraculous escapes from all manner of danger. In a word, he was voyaging with Sinbad the Sailor.

The bell rang, the train started; but Philip had neither eyes nor ears for anything but the words and gestures of his companion. The city was left behind, and out of the black darkness outside an occasional lamp shining from some house revealed that they were in the country; but Philip heeded not; for the narrator went on adding incident to incident and adventure to adventure. At last the story came to an end; the cigar had been smoked and thrown away long before.

"Isn't there any more?" asked Philip.

"No! It is enough," and the man wiped his brow. He was really exhausted by the effort. In telling that story, in recalling and forcing into the body of it details and incidents which had slept those many years in his memory, Himmelstein had gone through the hardest mental labor of his life. He was exhausted and unnerved. Lying back in his seat, his features began to work convulsively. Philip, watching him, grew uneasy.

"Say, isn't it time for us to go to Isobel's car?"

"No, no; not yet," gasped Himmelstein. His face was ashen gray.

"But I want to see her," said the boy, beginning to whimper.

"There is no hurry; sit down."

"I'm going now," sobbed Philip, frightened and uneasy. He made to arise, but Himmelstein shoved him back into the seat.

"It's no use, Philip. Ach Gott! it's no use." With an effort he sat erect, and added: "Your sister is not on this train. This train is now half way to Milwaukee!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH PROFESSOR HIMMELSTEIN GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF
HIMSELF AND RESTORES PHILIP TO PERFECT GOOD
HUMOR.

THIS train—half way to Milwaukee? ”

It was now Philip's turn to grow pale.

“So!” moaned Himmelstein.

“And where—where is Isobel?” gasped the boy. He had ceased weeping: his emotions were too violent for tears.

“She's on her way to New York. By this time she is over one hundred twenty miles.”

Philip felt sure now that he was dreaming. He rubbed his eyes and pinched himself.

“I—I don't understand,” he said, beginning to tremble. “Is it a joke? or —or—what is it?”

“No, Philip: it is not a joke.”

“But Isobel! I want to see Isobel.” The boy's senses were losing their numbness, and he broke into a wail.

“Hush! hush! People are looking at you. Stop,” hissed Himmelstein, who, thoroughly frightened himself, looked fiercer than Philip had ever seen him before.

The terrified boy checked himself with a great effort, though his bosom heaved, his breath came fast, and large tears stood in his eyes and rolled down his face.

“I want Isobel. O, what shall I do?” He was breaking into loud weeping again.

“If you cry,” whispered Himmelstein, putting a hand

over Philip's mouth, "I will tell you nothing. But if you keep still, I will gif you the whole story, and I will show you why you must not be frightened, but why you must be very glad, Philip. I haf goot news. When you hear it, you will not cry, but you will laugh."

"Does Isobel know where I am?"

"O, yes; she has already received a telegraph that you are with me. I sent it, just before we left Chicago. And, Philip, I will bring you back to her in New York so that you will be there for Christmas eve."

"I—I want to go back now," moaned the boy.

"But no, my poy: you can not go back now. But when you do go back, you will haf—O! so much money. I haf one hundret-fifty dollars of my own. It is for you. And you will be paid sixty dollars more."

"Paid sixty dollars! Who will pay me sixty dollars?"

"The man who gives the lecture."

"Gives the lecture?"

"Listen, Philip, and I will tell you all. It is now the nineteenth of December. On the night of the 22d, you will sing one song—just one little song *in public*. That is all. Then on the next day, you will come with me back to New York with two hundret and ten dollars to gif your goot sister Isobel for a present."

"But Isobel—does she know about this?"

"Listen, Philip; and I will tell you all. Philip, I lofed you and I lofed your beautiful woice, and I trained it till it was the finest woice in New York. And I was proud of it—O, so proud. And I wanted to make your woice to be heard by the great musical public, and Isobel would not.

And I begged, and she would not. My heart was nearly broken. The sweet voice is the gift of the good Gott, and she would not let it be sung. When she went from New York, I was alone in the world. And I did no longer like the taste of life. I cared not to teach, and I would go back to the Vaterland. But when the time came that I should go, I could not—my Gott, I could not go, with you and Isobel and the little kinder at my heart.”

Here the wretched Himmelstein patted Philip caressingly on the cheek: the boy shrunk from his touch, and the man winced.

“Ah, Philip: you trust me not. Listen, and you will understand. I could not leave the States before that voice was given once, just once, only once to the public. And so I made up to go to Milwaukee and find you, Philip, and see you once again. Ah, I love you, and I would not hurt you; but I had to do it.”

“And did you go to Milwaukee?”

“Yes, Philip, behold!”

Professor Himmelstein removed his spectacles, slipped them into his pocket, and, in their place, put on a pair of dark glasses. From his coat pocket he produced a false beard, and fitted it on.

“Oh!” cried Philip, “it’s the face we saw against the pane two nights ago.”

“Yes, Philip: I disguised myself.”

“But why?”

“Because I came to see you, my boy; and I did not know but that I might get you away in some how, and I did not want any one to know me.”

Philip began to blubber.

"No, Philip, don't; or you make me unhappy. Haf I not been unhappy enough? Haf I not suffered the torture of the heart? Listen! when I got to Milwaukee, it was on the day of the seventeenth, and I went down the town for my dinner. And then I was walking along the street, when I see you, you yourself, standing a cake and candy store beside. And then you went to the window of the store, and you looked in, and I could see that you were cold, and you did begin to utter that beautiful voice, and it was the voice of an angel. And, O Philip, it was so beautiful; and I did make up my mind to steal—not you, not you, but that beautiful voice of the angel.

"When I come to Milwaukee, it was only to see your face again; it was to see Isobel and Marie and Charlie; it was in the hope of getting you to sing despite of Isobel; it was to watch ofer you all. But when I heard you sing, I was tempted: I could not resist. Your voice, Philip, was my voice, and I was made up my mind to steal it."

"But what did you want to do?"

"I was going to run away with the voice to Boston, and to get you to sing there in one concert, and then to send you back to Isobel."

"But this is not the way to Boston."

"No, Philip: you are right: it is not. From the time I did see you on the street, I did follow you close. And so I soon did hear that you were going to New York once more again."

"Was it you that the Sisters saw when Isobel fainted?"

"Yes: I followed you, because I wanted to steal you

away. But when I heard that you go back to New York, I thought to steal you in Chicago, and bring you back to Milwaukee. So I did not follow you any more."

"Did you send me that coat?"

"Did it fit you well?"

"First-rate," replied Philip, kindly refraining from telling the Professor that his gift had not been used.

"It look very fine on you," observed Himmelstein, with an attempt at smiling which was a horrible failure. Realizing the effect, he removed his glasses and beard, and tried again. The failure this time was not so marked.

"What did you do next?"

"I did nothing but think and walk around. But yesterday afternoon, I was passing the Pabst Theatre, and there I met a musicianer of whom I had the acquaintance in New York. He brought me in and showed me the theatre, and he told me how a gentleman had telegraphed and secured the hall for a lecture on 'Christmas in Song and Story,' on the night of December the twenty-second. The musicianer said how the gentleman had gifen him the commission to get three soloists. And, Philip, my heart did jump."

Philip was getting interested. Just the least touch of redness about his eyes was all that was left of his late grief and terror.

"Did he want a boy soprano?"

"He wanted a goot soloist, liking better a goot soprano. And listen, Philip. Isobel, your goot sister, would not haf the objection, if she knew. Philip, the man who gifs the lecture is a gentleman, and very goot and very wealthy.

And it is for a select audience. I haf been told that all the nicest ladies and gentlemen of the city will be there. O no! it is not a common audience, such as Isobel would not like. No; it is most select. They do not pay the money at the door, but they enter by card. It is very high, it is elevating, it is loafly, and Isobel will be glad."

"That's so," admitted the boy, now become quite tranquil. "I'm sure Isobel would not object so very much. And then, when I bring her all that money, she will be rich, and won't have to bother about working and supporting us. My!"

Philip's idea of the value of a dollar was rather vague and exceedingly optimistic.

"But," he went on, "did you offer to have me sing, and did the man agree? How could you do that? You didn't know then that you would catch me."

"I will explain. It is true that I did not know how to catch you. But when the musicianer say, the gentleman, he wants some fine soprano—a boy preferred—to sing Noël—"

Philip gasped.

"So! to sing Noël at the end of the entertainment, I could not say nothing. Then I say: 'Mr. Julian'—that was his name—'Mr. Julian, gif me twenty-four hours, and perhaps I get you the finest soprano in the United States.' He say, all right, and I promise to telegraph him already when I know sure."

"The time you went to buy your ticket I saw you go over to the telegraph office. Was that what you went for?"

"How you see everything! Yes; I sent a telegraph to Mr. Julian, which said, 'I haf got the boy to sing Noël.'"

"And will my name be on the programme?"

"No, my tear!"

The look of enthusiasm died from Philip's face.

"Why not?"

"You will sing under another name, my poy. From now until we start for New York your name is Marion Philippo."

"Why can't I have my own name," pouted Philip.

"Because we might get arrested by a policeman."

"And put in jail?" asked Philip, showing a new kind of interest.

"So! and my name will be not Professor Himmelstein, but Franz Schumann."

"Why, it will be fun!" cried Philip, bright-eyed and radiant.

"So!" drawled Franz Schumann, putting on his disguise, after an ineffectual attempt at smiling.

While the foregoing conversation was going on, Isobel, seated in a Pullman car, was trying to conceal from the children her fears. They had now been traveling for over twenty minutes, and no word had come from Philip and Himmelstein, who, she supposed, were in the smoker. What could keep them so long? Under pretense of getting a glass of water for Charlie, she whispered in the porter's ear, as she passed up the aisle:

"Would you kindly slip into the smoker, and see whether there's a little boy there named Philip, with a man

with a very full mustache. He's a German and his hair is long and grizzled."

"Any message for them, miss?"

"Yes; you might say that Miss Lachance is waiting for them. They both belong to this car, but the man went there to take a smoke."

The porter looked puzzled.

"Why did he go there? Every Pullman has its own smoker. All right, ma'am," he added, quickly, as he noticed the distress that came upon the girl's face, "I'll go at once."

Isobel returned to her place with a sinking heart. Why had she not thought of it before? There was absolutely no need for the Professor to go to the ordinary smoking-car. Perhaps—but she refused to let her thoughts travel on the ugly way of suspicion. Summoning a smile, she turned to the children and began chatting with them quite gaily.

Presently the porter glided up to her.

"There ain't no sech persons in the smoking car," he whispered. "Beg pardon, miss, you look ill. Shall I bring you a drink of water?"

"If you please," the girl murmured.

"Are you ill, Isobel?" asked Marie.

"A little dizzy, dear. People often get dizzy on the cars."

The porter returned with the water. Isobel swallowed a little.

"Thank you," she said. "You are very kind."

"Anything you want, miss, let me know."

With an effort, Isobel addressed herself to entertaining the children.

"Is Miss Isobel Lachance in this car?" asked an official of the road in a loud tone, as he threw open the door and entered.

"That is my name," said the girl, putting her hand to her heart.

"This is for you then," he said, handing her a telegram. Her fingers so trembled that she could scarcely tear the envelope. Shading her face with her hand, so that the children could not see it, she read the following:

"MISS ISOBEL LACHANCE: Philip with me and will be with me till December 24th. Will bring him back safe. Do not worry. Do not look for him. It is useless; we are traveling. HENRY HIMMELSTEIN."

The words were straight and clear to her eye at the first reading. Then, when she essayed to read them again, they danced and whirled about the yellow sheet. For several minutes, still shading her face, Isobel kept her eyes fixed on the dancing letters; kept them there till the characters ceased their motions and fell into their proper places.

"Isobel! Isobel!" she heard her name called. It seemed to come from far away, though the words fell from Marie at her side.

"Well, dear," she answered mechanically.

"What's the matter, Isobel? Has anything happened to Philip? You look so pale."

"He's with Professor Himmelstein, my dear. And now, I will go and say my beads. Take care of Charlie."

Isobel retired to an obscure corner of the car and told

her beads. She told them well and fervently, and for well nigh every bead there was a tear.

When she returned half an hour later to the children, her face was serene and calm. Not so her heart.

Isobel was brave: the fox might gnaw, but she would not cry out.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH MARION PHILIPPO IS PREPARED TO ASTOUND A
MOST CULTURED MILWAUKEE AUDIENCE.

IT is December the twenty-second. A little distance westward beyond the city limits of Milwaukee stands a house which, vacant in winter, in summer time is used as a villa. At present, however, it happens to be occupied. Philip has been living there the past two days right royally. It has been little work and much play.

The professor has been as kind and tender as a mother. In many respects he has gratified the young gentleman's every whim. Should their stay there last much longer, Philip would be a spoiled boy.

However, Professor Schumann, as he now chooses to be called, is very strict on certain points. Philip cannot go beyond the yard which surrounds the villa—spacious grounds, it is true, but by no means large enough to suit the desires of the young soprano—and when he does take the air within this enclosure, he is muffled up so completely that, on the one hand, it is hardly possible for him to take cold, and, on the other, the sharpest eye would fail to recognize the little boy who on December the seventeenth charmed a miscellaneous crowd in the open air with his wondrous singing of Noël.

“Remember, Marion Philippo,” the Professor would say when Philip chafed under these limitations, “remember

it is your first appearance. If you do well, Isobel's fortune is made."

As a rule this remark reduced the youngster to submission.

For half an hour in the morning and another half in the afternoon, Marion Philippo was compelled to practise. In spite of himself, he was carried away by the Professor's enthusiasm, and was so docile that Himmelstein was raised to the seventh heaven of musical happiness.

The last practise had come. Marion Philippo was attired in a very pretty suit of velvet, set off to advantage by laced cuffs, a colored tie in which red predominated, and a pair of shining patent leather slippers. A barber had been on the scene just previously to the practise, and had left our little friend with a glorious head of hair—his own hair, it is true, but coaxed and twisted into ripples of beauty.

"Ah, Marion Philippo," said the Professor from the piano stool, "you look bewitching."

"I do look pretty gay," assented Philippo serenely.

"The women—the fine ladies—will all come and kiss you."

"O, I say," piped the boy in great indignation, "I'm not going to stand that—I don't want to sing at all."

"They will come and kiss you, if I do not prevent them. But do not fear. It shall not come to happen. I will bring you to the theatre in a closed carriage, and I will bring you back in a closed carriage: it will be here in an hour. And while we are there, we will sit alone in a room, till it is time for you to come out. Then we shall come back; and to-morrow we shall go to Chicago, and from

there to New York, and O, Isobel will be so happy when she shall see you in your fine clothes, and with your pockets filled with money."

"It will be immense!" said Marion Philippo joyfully. The thought of the home-coming filled his heart almost to overflowing. Were it not that he thought he was working in Isobel's interest, he would not have fought so manfully against the feeling of homesickness, which, despite the endeavors of the Professor, attacked him so frequently during the long hours. But he was brave for Isobel's dear sake.

"Coom now: we will practise."

Marion Philippo was in splendid voice. Not an inflection, not a cadence was other than what the Professor had suggested. Tremolo and trill, the swell and the fall, the expression of pathos and of triumph—all were brought out with an accuracy which left practically nothing to be desired.

"Ach Gott!" cried Himmelstein at the conclusion of the third stanza, "where are the men who say that moosic is not the greatest of the arts? Let them coom. Let them listen once to Marion Philippo sing Noël, and they will go away conwerted. Ah! Marion Philippo, the people will rise in their seats, and they will coom behind the scenes—"

"No, you don't," broke in Marion Philippo. "I don't want to be—"

"Ah, wait! but when they coom behind, we shall not be there. Oh, no! we will be rolling away in our carriage. And they will talk and wonder who Marion Philippo is; but they shall not know."

"O, you can tell them my name, you know."

"So? We shall see."

The Professor ate no supper. He had enough to do to see to the proper dieting of his pet nightingale. Philip rebelled, for his appetite was good. But the Professor had his way, and the boy arose hungry, but consoled with the promise of a magnificent banquet immediately after the performance.

Promptly at a quarter past seven the carriage came. If Philip had been a small case of dynamite, Professor Himmelstein could not have been more careful in wrapping him. The bandaging, the tying of wraps, the pinning, the intense study given to every detail by the old man would have done credit to the most skilful of surgeons. There were earmuffs, and gloves, and covers for the wrists, and gums for the feet, and wraps for the face, and a silk handkerchief for the neck, and, last, but not least, a sort of domino which covered the coat and reached to the boy's heels. Even Isobel would not have recognized her little brother. Before the preparations for bringing him into the open air were quite complete, Philip was reduced to tears.

"I ain't a wax doll!" he pouted.

"So? you are worth a million of the wax dolls. Now, Philip, I mean, Marion, do not open your mouth to breathe, but keep your lips shut tight, and breathe through your nose."

"Yes, I will. But what are we waiting for?"

"And Marion, do not eat that lozenge; but keep it in your mouth till it is all melted away."

"Yes; let's go."

Professor Himmelstein glanced around the room to make sure that he had not forgotten anything. Then he fixed his gaze on Philip.

"Are your wristbands on?"

"You spent at least five minutes at them."

"And haf you your lace cuffs in your pocket?"

"Yes, yes; I've got everything. Come, 'et's go."

"Well. We go. So!" and putting on his beard and dark glasses, Himmelstein conducted the boy to the carriage.

It was nearly eight o'clock when they arrived at the Pabst Theatre. As they got out, Philip observed with interest the long line of carriages and the knots of ladies and gentlemen who were making their way to the main entrance.

It was a bitter cold night; but so absorbed was Philip in contemplating the scene that he stood stock still on the sidewalk, and gazed about him with open mouth.

"Ach Himmel!" roared the Professor, catching him in a grasp of iron. "You will kill yourself. To stand here in the cold and with the mouth open to receive all the microbes of the city that hate the sweet woice."

As he spoke, he was dragging Philip toward the side entrance. They were in much faster than suited the will of the singer, but he saw that resistance was useless. Himmelstein was in a rage of terror.

"So!" he said when they had been shown into a little room, which, according to his directions, had been almost hermetically sealed, "so! now we shall stay here till the time is at hand. The lecturer will begin in one minute; then

there will be a solo by a lady ; then more lecture ; then a solo by a man and more lecture ; then a duo, then a trio, then a quartet, and then, Marion Philipppo, it will be your turn. They are all fine singers, the very finest in the city. And they will all sing the beautiful Christmas songs. And the people will think it very goot. But when you come out and sing, Marion, they will forget forefer and forefer that the others have sung ; and they will go home with just one thing in their heads, and that one thing will be one woice."

"Where's that orange you promised me?" asked Philip. The Professor groaned ; but he got the lad the orange.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD FRIEND APPEARS ON THE SCENE AGAIN, AND THE AUDIENCE IS TREATED TO ITS FIRST PLEASANT SURPRISE.

DURING the hour and a half of waiting in the little room, the Professor was, as the saying is, on pins and needles. One would think, looking at him, that it was to be not Philip's, but his first appearance. He paced the room, he bit his finger-nails, he tousled his hair till it stood up a bristling plume. At intervals he would put on his false beard, and after an impatient survey in the mirror, remove it. Now and then, he made an attempt at conversation, but his words were incoherent; he would begin six or seven sentences and leave them all incomplete. If the Professor is ever required to finish all the sentences he began that night, it will go hard with him indeed.

One or twice he took out his beads: they rattled in his fingers. But he could not pray.

"Ach Gott! I am a willin," he burst out after the second attempt.

Marion Philipppo, all this time was perfectly tranquil. Beyond admiring himself at intervals of five or ten minutes in the mirror, he was content to sit cross-legged sucking an orange, or examining the pictures of a juvenile magazine which the Professor had thoughtfully provided.

The room was so far from the stage that but few distinct sounds reached their ears. The voice of the lecturer could

just be heard. Now and then a light clapping of hands (the audience was not demonstrative) broke the monotony. When the first singer's voice was heard, Himmelstein opened the door a few inches, previously putting on his disguise and placing Philip where he could not possibly be in a draught.

"It is goot," he commented, "but wait: they will see."

After the song, the door was carefully shut, the false beard removed, to be put on again when the time came for the next musical number.

About half past nine o'clock, there was a tap at the door.

"Herein!" chattered the Professor.

"You are to come next," said a voice without. "Get your singer at the wings and be ready."

"So! Now, Marion Philipppo, coom, and say nothing. I will put you on a wing and will myself go to the piano. Where did I tell you to stand?"

"Three feet back of the footlights and in the middle of the stage."

"And when are you to coom out and bow?"

"When the lecture man says: 'I have now the pleasure of introducing to you the great boy soprano, Master Marion Philipppo.'"

"Then what do you?"

"Why just walk out, and when you've played the introduction, I begin to sing."

"So! Now quick: keep your mouth closed until you begin to use your voice."

The usher, who had been waiting outside, put in his head at the door, and said:

"Pardon me; but there is no time to lose. Professor, if you go down to your piano, I will see to the boy."

"So! Well, goot-by, Phil—Marion. Got bless you," and the old man, wringing the boy's hand with an energy which caused the young singer to wriggle and wince, staggered away.

"What's the matter with him, anyhow?" asked the usher as he conducted Philip from the room. "Anything wrong with his head? He's the craziest-looking loon I've seen in a long time."

"He's just excited," said Philippo, tranquilly. "He's always that way when there's any music to be sung; but to-night he's worse than usual. What's the use of getting excited about a little bit of a song? It will be all over in five minutes. Do you see any use, sir?"

"Can't say I do," replied the usher with a grin. "But you know most people are more or less self-conscious when they have to appear in public."

"It isn't right to be selfish," remarked Philip oracularly. "O, there's the lecturer," he continued as the usher stationed him beside a wing, "and—and —"

Philip rubbed his eyes and stared again.

"Why," he gasped in delighted astonishment, "if it isn't Mr. John Dunne!"

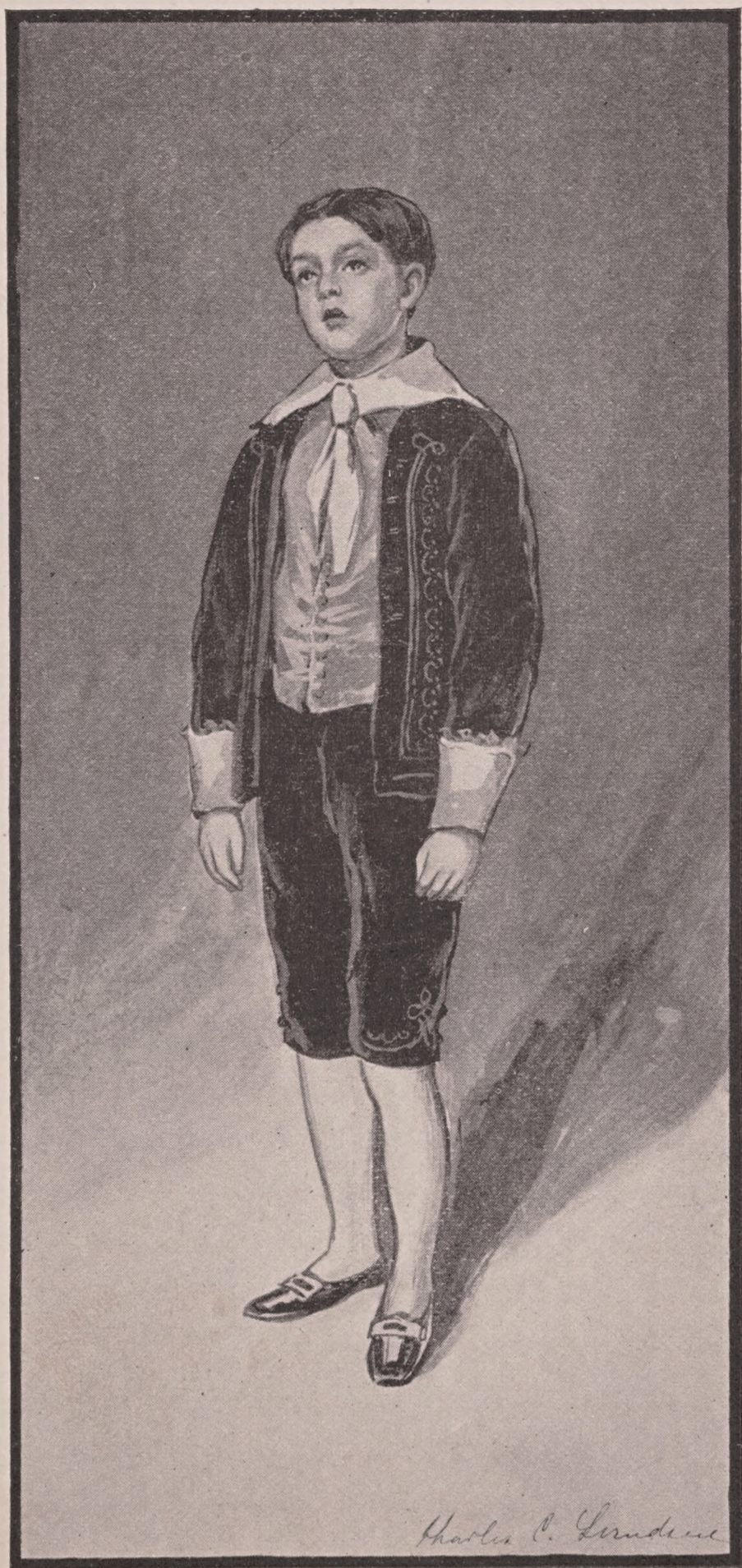
"Do you know him?" whispered the usher.

"Know him? I guess I do: he's one of my great friends. We had an oyster supper together about five days ago. O, he's just a daisy. If Isobel knew I was going to sing for him, she'd be delighted. I wonder why the Professor didn't tell me it was Mr. John Dunne."

In justice to Professor Himmelstein, it should be explained that he had never seen the lecturer during all the negotiations. The name John Dunne, too, signified nothing to him. But when he took his seat at the piano in the orchestra and looked up, he was as much astonished as Philip had been a moment before. So this was Mr. John Dunne! The very man who had taken Philip Lachance into Conroy's on the seventeenth of December. An almost overpowering access of fear came upon the old man. He glanced furtively toward the other end of the theatre, as though he were meditating a flight. There were three policemen at the door, and the vestibule was fairly crowded with young men. The house itself was full—every seat and every box was occupied. Seldom if ever had a more refined, a more select audience gathered in Pabst's Theatre.

Having taken in all this in that one wild glance, Himmelstein pulled off his dark glasses, and stared at them intently, holding them, the while, within an inch of his nose. A few of the younger people in the front seats tittered. But the Professor heard not, and continued to scrutinize his glasses with a scowl, which, in combination with his shaggy beard, gave him the aspect of a villain in a three-volume novel.

Under all that apparent fierceness, there quaked a much terrified heart. John Dunne, he reflected, knew Philip, and Philip knew John Dunne. There would be a recognition; there would be explanations; and the end of it would be that Professor Himmelstein, a man hitherto of spotless reputation, would be clapped into jail, and every journal in the country would announce in glaring headlines the mar-



"His first appearance."

velous kidnapping of Philip Lachance by Henry Himmelstein, professor of music.

"It is the way of the transgressor: it is the punishment of Gott. Perhaps, it is just. Well, if Philip sing well, I am willing to go into the jail; for I haf lived my life." Thus muttered Himmelstein to himself, as the lecturer was giving what was evidently the peroration of his lecture.

Finally, he came to a pause and bowed. A wave of enthusiastic murmuring rippled through the audience, succeeded by a clapping of hands, a trifle more vivacious than could have been expected from these local Vere de Veres. The Christmas sentiment, touched as it is with all that is sweetest and loveliest in human life, had been stirred within them.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," pursued the lecturer, "I have reserved as a fitting end to this evening devoted to Christmas and the Christ-Child, a number, which, I have been given to understand, will be the most memorable thing of this entertainment. In Catholic France, Christmas to many and many a heart would not be Christmas were they to fail hearing Adolphe Adam's Noël. Some few days ago, I happened to overhear a little boy singing a stanza of this sweet and most touching melody. He sang it as though he had been taught of some glorious angel. I made friends with the little fellow, who, I learn, returned to New York, his native city, two or three days ago. Now, it was to this boy's singing that this evening's entertainment is due. His sweet voice filled me with all the Christmas memories of my whole life. All the love and tenderness and affection proper to this holy and joyful season came

back to me (if I may so express myself) in one single wave of emotion. After leaving the boy, it occurred to me that I could do nothing better than voice, if possible, my own feelings, my recollections, my readings connected with Christmas in song and story; and so it came about through the inspiration of a little child that you and I, ladies and gentlemen, have thus pleasantly come together to-night."

There was another murmur of applause.

"In arranging my lecture," continued Mr. Dunne, "I resolved, if possible, to get some boy soprano to sing Noël: not the boy I heard singing it, because, as I learned by chance, he left for New York two days after my meeting him. Being called away from town on important business, I could not attend to the matter myself; but I put it in the hands of a musical agent. At first, he could not find any one who, in his opinion, could do justice to the song. But at the eleventh hour—and after I had, not without a struggle, concluded to omit Noël—he found just what was wanted. A friend of his from New York, Professor Himmelstein, told him that he could secure the services of a boy who, in his opinion, was the greatest boy soprano in the United States. Twenty-six hours after this conversation, Himmelstein telegraphed from Chicago that he had got the boy, together with his teacher, Professor Franz Schumann. It will be the young soprano's first appearance. Ladies and gentlemen, I have now the pleasure of introducing to you the great boy soprano, Master Marion Philippo."

At the name, Philip, wondering very much over some

of the things just said, stepped out from behind the scenes and, with eyes opened to their widest and fastened intently upon Mr. Dunne, advanced to the middle of the stage.

At sight of the little boy with the soft, childish face and total lack of self-consciousness, there was a succession of "ohs" and "ahs" from the balcony down to the orchestra circle.

"The little darling!" came from a lady in tones clearer than she intended: and then the greatest applause of the evening awoke the echoes of the magnificent building.

Mr. Dunne, meanwhile, looked at Philip, started slightly, and, with a self-control which did him credit, turned to his reading desk and drank off a glass of water.

Philip, unconscious of the audience, walked directly up to him, and with his confiding smile, said:

"How de do, Mr. Dunne," and put out his hand.

The applause that had begun to die away awoke again. It looked very pretty, very naïve to these people, who knew nothing of Marion Philippo's acquaintance with Mr. Dunne, to see the young soprano thus paying his respects in public to a man they all knew and loved.

"I will see you after the song, Philip," whispered Mr. Dunne in return pressing the boy's hand warmly. "Now go, my boy, and do your best."

Mr. Dunne retired, puzzled, wondering; Philip turned and, advancing, bowed; and Himmelstein, whose hair was now more savage in appearance than his beard, struck the opening chords. With his hands behind his back, his head

erect, Philip glanced smilingly about the house. To him they were all friends. And in answer to that smile, there was scarce one in the audience who did not return it, with nods and bows and eyes that told the friendship and good will thus suddenly evoked.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH THE AUDIENCE IS SURPRISED BEYOND THE WILDEST DREAM OF PROFESSOR HIMMELSTEIN, AND PHILIP IS THE MOST ASTOUNDED BOY THAT EVER SANG IN PUBLIC ON THE STAGE.

BUT Mr. Dunne was by no means the only person in the Pabst Theatre on that eventful night who was surprised by the unlooked-for appearance of Philip Lachance. In the front seats of a private box flush with the stage, and so near it that she could reach to the footlights with the hand, sat Jennie Hume with her brother, who, on this bright evening, looked, if possible, more than ever like a glorified pussy-cat.

On Philip's appearing, Jennie uttered a sound of awe.

"Something's going to happen," she exclaimed; and she opened eyes and mouth.

Walter said "Gee!" and tried to whistle softly, while kicking the legs of his chair.

"Aunt," cried Jennie, turning to a middle-aged lady who was seated beside an old gentleman of distinguished appearance, "Aunt, that's Isobel Lachance's brother. I'm sure it is. You know, I told you they went back to New York. I wonder how he comes to be here."

"Indeed! How strange!" said Mrs. Easton. "Father," she said to the old man, "Father, there's a mystery here. That boy who ought to be in New York interests me very



“On Philip’s appearing . . . Walter said ‘Gee!’”

much. Poor little dear! what a sweet engaging manner he has."

Mr. Hammond, the father of the lady who just addressed him, had a severe, unsmiling expression. Just now, however, the severity melted away as he witnessed the pretty handshaking scene between Mr. Dunne and Philip.

"Upon my word, Belle," he exclaimed, "I never saw anything prettier in my life. That boy would interest any one. There's something about the little fellow's expression which touches me very much."

"I feel just as you do father," returned Mrs. Easton. "Jennie has told me all about the little Lachances, who came and went like a pretty dream, and I was interested in them even before I saw this boy. Jennie is quite in love with Isobel. If she's as engaging as the boy, it is small wonder."

"O, I do wish mamma had come," said Jennie.

"I heard Philip sing once—by the way, why do they call him Marion Philipppo? There must be something wrong. I feel as if I were in the plot of a good story-book. There's a genuine mystery. I wonder how it will turn out."

In the front seats, and not far from Jennie, sat Sophie and Edna. Having stared thus far at the young soprano, they were now expressing their utter astonishment in dumb show to Jennie, who, in turn, answered by mystic shrugs and gestures. Presently, Jennie's eyes fell upon Professor Himmelstein. Again she started, again she gasped, again her eyes were opened and her brows raised.

"O, aunt!" she exclaimed, "I've seen that man there

at the piano before. Where was it? O, yes: he was the man we saw at the station running to catch the train that Isobel left on. Do you remember him, Walter?"

"That's a fact: that's him, sure enough," answered Walter, wriggling in his seat like a surprised eel. I say, Jennie, it *is* like a story-book."

"I'd give anything to understand," cried the girl fervently. "Ah, there they begin."

At the first chord from the piano, a silence suddenly fell upon that great assemblage. The prelude was played, the critical moment had come; and Philip, with the skilled manner of one who had sung in public all his life, slipped easily and sweetly into the melody. His opening notes, full and true, though not very loud, sent a thrill through every listener. At first, it was only the voice, so free, so sweet, which charmed each listening ear. But very presently, it was something far above and beyond the reach of musical sound. For almost at once, his mobile face took on an expression which told the audience that with this little soprano music and feeling were moving hand in hand. While his tongue syllabled the holy night, his soul saw it—saw the stars, saw the earth waking from its slumber of sin and of death. For Philip there was no audience. The things that were had become as the things that are not, and, at one bound, his imagination had leaped across the centuries and gained the fields that lay still and breathless in the solemn midnight of the olden days. For Philip there was no audience at all. In its stead there was a vision. A great light shown down upon the plains, a multitude of the heavenly host bathed and floated in its

splendor, and the shepherds were either face downward upon the ground, or holding their arms before their eyes lest the splendor of God should strike them dead.

When Philip came to the line,

“A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices;”

his voice sank so low that many held their breath instinctively, lest they should lose the slightest fraction of the lovely sounds. On the word “thrill” his voice so quivered that not only the sound but the thing signified passed from heart to heart like echoes among the answering hills. The song had become more than a song. It had risen to a drama—and its subject was the Redemption.

“Fall on your knees!”

All the fullness, all the vibrant power of that extraordinary voice went into these words. One might fancy that the singer was an inspired and majestic messenger from on high calling upon all to adore.

“Oh, hear the angel voices.”

With the ending of this phrase, his voice died away—and there was an eloquent pause, while Philip, and with him the audience, seemed to be listening for the strains which once made the night of nights resound with “Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will.”

While Philip thus paused, the piano was silent: the piano was silent, and the auditors were silent. It was as though each one had caught his breath, and was waiting in tense expectation to catch the accents of the heavenly choirs.

Then suddenly, with triumph and joy in every tone,

with an echo of the gladness born of the gladdest tidings that ever fell upon mortal ear, with inspiration born of perfect faith, he trebled forth in a volume of loveliness:

“Noël ! Noël ! O night when Christ was born !
Noël ! Noël ! O night, O night divine !”

The first stanza was finished, and Philip, who was little of an angel, despite his voice, and very much of a boy, glanced cheerfully and complacently upon the audience, which, though he knew it not, he had bewitched. A moment before, he had been on the plains of Bethlehem, he had brought the audience along with him, and left them there with the angels; but he, he himself, bounded in an instant from the first to the nineteenth century and was back in Milwaukee and in the Pabst Theatre looking about at the sea of faces, and wondering why so many people were wiping their eyes with their handkerchiefs. The Professor meanwhile was playing the concluding bars. Poor old Professor Himmelstein no longer feared. He had forgotten everything in the music, and was as a mortal who had been raised to the skies. Those who had tittered at him a few moments ago, now looked at him in wonder. His head was thrown back, and his eyes were raised in an ecstasy. For him there was no longer either space or time.

He began the prelude to the second stanza with perfect phrasing. There was inspiration – inspiration born of that voice—in every touch of his fingers.

Philip's eyes meanwhile had happened to fall upon Jennie. She was watching him, and, though there were tears in her eyes, she broke into an April smile of recognition.

Philip now felt that he was at home. How nice it was that Jennie should be there! And beside her sat Walter, with a smile that defied measurement. Philip scarce had time to nod to them, and to observe the lady and the gentleman who sat behind them when Professor Himmelstein's prelude launched him into the second stanza.

The sweetness, the unconscious pathos were still with him, but the inspiration of the first stanza was lacking. Philip remained on the stage, remained unconscious of the sights and sounds around him; yet though he led not the way, he succeeded in keeping his hearers whither he had already brought them on the wings of sound.

However, as he went on in this second stanza, the music and the words gradually drew his thoughts and feelings back to the hills where the shepherds kept watch. Although his eyes were still fixed upon the two children in the private box, they soon lost sight of what was before them and looked into the far East and the far times when night was truly made divine. Again the inspiration returned, again his voice rang out with all the spirit of angelic joy. The effect upon the audience was more striking than before.

Toward the end of the stanza, Philip was brought back again to the reality of his surroundings by the slight movement of the lady in the private box. Overcome by the tenderness of the boy's voice, touched, as she had never been touched before, with the sweetness and love of the Christ-Child, she bowed her head, putting her hands to either temple. Philip stared.

Professor Himmelstein played the prelude to the third

stanza, and, when the time came, struck the chord which was to guide the sweet voice. But no voice was heard. He waited a moment, then played the prelude once more. Again he waited. His face was turned toward the people, and, raising his eyes, he noticed a strange stir. Many were gazing in amazement toward the stage.

With a shiver, the Professor looked up, and there he saw a spectacle which he shall never forget. Oblivious of his surroundings, Philip with his eyes fixed upon the woman, whose head was still bowed, was walking slowly across the stage, his face pale, and his bosom heaving. He stopped directly in front of the box, a look of wonder, of incredulity, upon his countenance. The silence had become painful. Just then the woman raised her face. At once, Philip's expression of wonder changed to an exceeding joy.

"Why, mamma," he cried in a voice, which, though pitched low, was so distinct that it could be heard throughout the house, "they told me you were dead."

And on the instant he leaped from the stage into the box, and threw his arms about the woman's neck.

A moment later, he drew his head back to look into the dear face. At once, the light of gladness went out of his eyes, and the warm blood mantled his face.

"My dear boy," said the lady, who, though thoroughly amazed, remained mistress of herself, "my dear boy, what do you mean?" And while she held his hands, her gentle eyes looked with eager inquiry into his.

At the sound of her voice, the disappointment on Philip's face was unmistakable. He scarcely heeded Mr.

Dunne calling upon the people to leave quietly ; scarcely heeded the puzzled Jennie, who, with Walter, had placed herself as a screen between him and the audience.

“Oh ! I thought you were my mother, ma’am,” he said in tones of bitter disappointment, and forthwith the tears sprang to his eyes. Try as he might, he could not force them back. Philip began to weep. He checked his sobs manfully, and went on with a strange quiver in his voice :

“I saw you with your head bowed down the way she used to do ; and I was sure you were my mother. I never thought she was dead. And then when you looked up and I saw your face, it was mamma’s face all over—only looking softer and paler, like you had been sick. O, but you do look so like her, ma’am ; and I did never believe she was dead, and I beg your pardon for acting so.”

As Philip went on speaking, the old gentleman was bending down at his side and observing his every look, tone and gesture with an intensity beyond description. The lady was fast losing her wondrous control. She went pale, then red, then pale again ; her bosom was shaken with emotion, her lips trembled. Suddenly, eagerly, quickly, she gasped :

“Tell me quick, my dear, what was your mamma’s name.”

“Mrs. Lachance.”

“But her maiden name, dear ?”

“Agnes Hammond.”

“O, my God !” cried Mrs. Easton, throwing her arms about the boy’s neck. “My God ! No, my dear, I am not your mamma, but your mamma’s sister.”

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHAPTER OF RECOGNITIONS AND SURPRISES. PHILIP DECIDES TO REMAIN IN MILWAUKEE, AND ISOBEL GETS A GLADSOME MESSAGE.

“LET me look on his face again,” said Mr. Hammond. His lips and fingers were trembling, and he could scarcely pronounce the words.

He took the boy's face between his hands, and gazed long and intently into Philip's upturned eyes.

“It is her face, poor Agnes's face,” he said at length in broken tones. “Is Agnes—is your mother dead, my boy?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You are my own grandchild, little one,” and stooping he kissed the boy hurriedly and left the box.

“Ah, no wonder I felt a strange attraction for you, my Philip,” said Mrs. Easton. “Your mother and I were always together—and—and—you are so like her, my dear, so like her, so like her!”

Philip was astonished, but of all those who were in the box, he was by far the most composed. He was too young to take in all at once the strange and wonderful series of events, of coincidences, which had at a moment changed the lives and fortunes of all the Lachances.

“You look so like my mother,” he said simply, “and—and—I like you.”

During all this, Jennie had stood gazing, transfixed.

"It's better than a play," said Walter in tones of awe. But Jennie gave no heed to his remarks.

"Say," continued Walter, "where do we come in? If Mrs. Easton is my aunt, and Philip is Mrs. Easton's uncle—I mean nephew—say, Jennie, that boy's mother is Mrs. Easton's sister, and Mrs. Easton's sister is our mother's sister. Say, Jennie, can't you tell a fellow what relation Philip is to me?"

"He's your cousin, Walter."

"Whoop-la!" yelled Walter, tumbling over a chair and into Philip's arms. "How de do, cousin Philip?"

"Are you a relation of mine, too?" asked Philip, now beaming with joy.

"You bet, I am," answered Walter, jerking Philip's arm with a cordiality that could not be mistaken.

"Say, Walter, have I many relations here?"

"The woods are full of 'em," cried Walter, dancing. "That girl there, Jennie—she's your cousin, too."

Jennie, not without a certain dignity, brushed the effusive Walter away.

"To think," she said, kissing Philip, "that Isobel, the nicest girl I ever met, the girl I fell in love with on sight, is my own, own cousin. O, it's all too good to be true. I can't believe it. Is it really you, Philip?"

"Yes: it just is," answered Philip. "I've been a pinching and a kicking myself—and the pinching hurts—and so I know it isn't a dream. Go on and pinch yourself: here, I'll do it for you."

"No, thank you, Philip. Was there ever anything like it, though. It's like a romance. And O, it is so beautiful!

And to think that the little boy, the poor little boy without an overcoat, into whose pocket I slipped a silver dollar—to think that he's my cousin! And that Isobel—my goodness, Walter, I've half a mind to drive to the convent and wake up Sister Mary Agnes, and tell her the whole story—Philip, cousin Philip, you owe me a dollar!"

Philip, getting more and more dazed as the facts in the case began to dawn on him, had nestled into Mrs. Easton's arms and was looking up into her tear-stained face.

In the body of the theatre, meanwhile, there was no vulgar display of curiosity. The audience prepared to leave, as though the performance had come to an end in the usual way. There was much whispering, much wonder, but the conduct of all was unexceptional.

From the moment that Philip leaped from the stage, poor old Himmelstein sat stock still at the piano with his eyes fixed on the private box. On seeing the lady, after a moment's pause and a few whispered words, return Philip's hug with interest, Himmelstein pulled his beard off with one jerk. Then he arose, and, having removed his dark glasses, put on his regular spectacles.

Those of the audience who were in the front seats, and were waiting for the crowd to thin, were all attracted by his strange conduct.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said in tones of remorse, "I am not Professor Schumann, but Professor Himmelstein. I am a willin. Ach Gott! get a policeman. I will go to the penitentiary."

"Poor fellow! he's mad!" said a voice.

"No, no; I am not mad. I wish I was mad. But I

am a thief, a stealer of a poy. And Gott has wisited me. I shall go to jail—”

A hand was laid on the Professor's shoulder. He turned and found himself facing Mr. Dunne.

“Professor,” he said with an air of authority, “say nothing, but come with me.”

“So,” groaned Himmelstein: and together they disappeared through the doorway under the stage.

“Who is that boy?” continued Mr. Dunne, as he conducted the old man up the stairway and behind the scenes.

“Ach Gott! I know not. One hour ago, he was Marion Philippo; all his life before, he was Philip Lachance, but now he is somebody else.”

“And who are you?”

“I am Henry Himmelstein, and I stole the poy away to hear once in public the angel woice. But I am punished. Ah! the death, the death in life has come upon me. If I beleafed not in Gott, I would now kill myself. O Isobel, my tear Isobel, how may I ever look upon your face—I, who have lied to you and deceived you!” The Professor, as he thus invoked the absent girl, clasped his hands and raised his eyes to heaven in agony. He was beside himself with remorse.

They had now reached the little room where Philip and his teacher had spent the evening. As they were just entering, Mr. Hammond came hurrying toward them.

“O, John Dunne, John Dunne!” he cried, “this is the most blessed day of my life. John! that little boy is my grandchild.”

“Wait there!” commanded Mr. Dunne, pushing the

old Professor into the room with a violence occasioned by the excitement which this announcement produced. And, twirling fiercely at his mustache the while, he hurried away.

He was in the private box in a moment, and taking the singer from Mrs. Easton's arms, he held him close, looking meanwhile into his eyes.

"Ah! what a fool I was," he exclaimed. "Philip, Philip! no wonder your face seemed so familiar to me. And yet—how could I have missed it? Yes: your mother's lovely eyes, her brows, her very smile—and I could not place it all."

"Are you a relation of mine, too?" cried the smiling Philip.

In answer to which, Mr. Dunne, into whose eyes had come the tears that would not be stayed, pressed the boy to his breast, and, letting him down, departed without saying a word.

"Why, aunt," said Jennie, "what in the world is the matter with Mr. Dunne? Why should he be in such a state of excitement? What has Philip to do with him, I should like to know?"

"Well Jennie, I don't mind telling you now, since it's bound to come out again. Little Philip here has something of a resemblance to Agnes Hammond, his mother, and Philip's mother was the woman whom Mr. Dunne was once engaged to marry."

"Oh, won't I have great news to tell Isobel when I go back to New York," exclaimed Philip.

"But you're not going back to New York, dear," said Mrs. Easton.

"Not? O, I go to Isobel. Me and the Professor start to-morrow."

"No, Philip," said Mr. Hammond, who having mastered his emotion had just entered the box; "no, Philip, you will not go to New York. To-night you come *home*."

"Home?"

"Yes, my child. Our home is yours: and you and Isobel and the two other little ones are going to gladden the hearts of an old man and an old woman who were once very obstinate and very cruel with their dear daughter Agnes, and who have been doing the penance of the heart ever since. O my God! how good you are to a man who has been proud and headstrong." He turned his face away and bowed his head.

Philip stepped over and took his hand.

"May I call you grandpa?" he asked.

"Please do. Ah, Belle," he added, turning to Mrs. Easton, "think of the joy and light and gladness that are to come into our house! When my wife sees this little boy, this little boy with the sweet, angelic features of our dear little girl whom we lost, lost through our own wretched pride, when my wife sees him and hears his voice and is called grandma, O, there will be the greatest joy that can be looked for upon earth! But—but I cannot talk. It is too much. Belle, I will go aside and—and—pray. Only God is to be spoken to at a time like this. John Dunne will attend to everything."

He left the box, as he spoke.

"Why," exclaimed Jennie, "I never knew how much grandpa loved his daughter Agnes!"

"No, dear; he wanted no one to know. But she was his dearest; she was the apple of his eye. And since—since she left Milwaukee nineteen years ago, he has never spoken of her, never allowed her name to be spoken in his presence, never gone to church."

"Ah!"

"And to-night for the first time, Jennie, he acknowledges his own pride and obstinacy. For the first time he speaks of God's goodness. Jennie, your dear grandpa is quite overcome."

"And do you think, aunt, that he will begin to go to church again?"

"Indeed, my dear, anything seems possible now. Now, my children, let us go; the people have all gone away. Philip, where are your things?"

"I want to write a letter to Isobel right away," said Philip.

"Never mind, dear. Mr. Dunne will see to that. I suppose he is now talking with your Professor. But where are your overcoat and hat?"

"Come along, aunt: they're in one of the dressing-rooms. Say," he went on as they passed through a side door near the box and went behind the scenes, "you don't think they'll do anything to Professor Himmelstein? He's the nicest old man in the world—almost as nice as my grandpa."

At that very moment, Mr. Dunne was treating with the poor Professor. On leaving Philip, he had returned to the private dressing-room. He found the old musician sitting with bowed head and clasped hands, the picture

of one who had drunk the cup of life's bitterness to the dregs.

"Professor Himmelstein," he said gravely, "I have come to thank you for stealing that boy."

"So?" muttered Himmelstein, vaguely, and looking up with lack-luster eye.

"Yes. Philip Lachance and Isobel are no longer poor, homeless children. Owing to his appearance here to-night, he has found his grandfather and all the relations of his mother. Philip and all of your little New York friends are now beyond the danger of want and poverty. His first appearance is his last. And they are coming to one of the happiest of homes."

"O my Gott!" said Himmelstein, rising, and catching Mr. Dunne's hands. "You make not a mock? You are not deceiving an old man?"

"Indeed, no. Your little ones have found a home and loving relations and friends. God bless you for the love and care you have shown them."

"It is the hand of Gott," said the old man, beaming with joy. "Ah, Isobel, ah, Philip. Now I shall go away, and I shall not come back; for I am not worthy. But far away in Vaterland I shall think of you night and day. And when I die I shall die happy, because that you, my lofely children, are happy and gay and—and—"

He could say no more. He sank back into his chair, and covered his face with his hands.

"No, Professor," said Mr. Dunne, looking with love upon the old man. "You will not go away. Where Isobel and Philip are, there shall you be."

“Ah, but she will not forgive me. She should not forgive me. I have stolen the poy and have struck the dagger of sorrow into her heart.”

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself for so judging Isobel. It is to you that she will owe the joy of the home-coming. Now, Professor, give me her address in New York, and we shall at once send her a telegram. Oh, what a beautiful Christmas it's going to be for us all.”

The sound of many feet was heard without; the door was thrown open, and in danced Philip.

“Ho, Professor,” he shouted, running up in high glee, “you said I would astonish the audience and I did, didn't I? Here's my Aunt Belle, and here's grandpa, and here's cousin Jennie, and cousin Walter—and, Professor, I've got a lot more relations.” He changed his voice and said in tones of awe: “Cousin Walter says that the woods are full of them.”

“So!” beamed the Professor.

Every one shook hands with Himmelstein, every one had something nice to say, every one invited him to be a guest.

“No: he is my guest for the present,” put in Mr. Dunne. “And now, Philip, put on your things and go home with your relations as fast as you can.”

“That's right,” said Philip affably. “I haven't had any supper yet.”

“Meantime the Professor and myself will see that Isobel starts for Milwaukee to-morrow morning and is here the night before Christmas.”

“Hurrah!” yelled Philip. “O but won't it be a Christmas and a half.”

“You can bet your life on it,” responded Walter.

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On the morning of December the twenty-second, Isobel, around whose eyes the circles had grown darker, received a letter. On glancing at the envelope, she recognized the handwriting of Professor Himmelstein. She held it unopened in her hands for several minutes. She feared the import of its contents. Finally she opened the envelope, and read what follows:

“Near Milwaukee, Dec. 20, 1899.

“DEAR ISOBEL:

“I call you dear, although I have no right; for I have deceived you. I stole Philip away for his voice. I wanted him to sing in public just once; and to-night he will sing one song. He will sing at about ten o'clock—Milwaukee time—on Dec. 22. Pray that he may do well: pray that no harm may come to him. I can not pray. I am too wicked. After the song, we will spend the night here, and then we will come back to New York, and Philip will be with you in time for Christmas. May it be most happy and merry for you. It will not be so for me; for on that day, or on the day before, I shall see my Philip for the last time, and you I shall not see again never more. It is hard, for I love you—love you and Marie and Charlie. It is hard. But I have dug the grave in which I must lie, only I pray you not to remember the Professor Himmelstein, who deceived you and stole away your little boy, but to remember the old man who taught Philip and loved him, and who was your true friend till the devil got into his heart and persuaded him to do a cruel thing and a



“ ‘Listen, Marie,’ she said presently.”

wicked thing. God forgive me. I shall not see your face again: God help me. Only pray that Philip may sing well to-night. Pray, pray! It is the only joy I look to in this life. Your unhappy and most unworthy friend,

“HENRY HIMMELSTEIN.”

“Ah, dear old man,” said Isobel. “God knows I forgive you; and God knows I would be only too glad to see your dear old face again.”

Isobel did not go to bed as early as usual that night. She kept her vigil for the dear little brother who was to face some audience—where she knew not—for the first time. Marie, too, was staying up. At half-past nine, the two went on their knees, and began the recital of the rosary to the end that Philip might sing well, and that no harm might come to their dear little brother. They finished the joyful mysteries, and were just in the first decade of the sorrowful, when there came a rapping at the door.

“A dispatch—paid,” explained the boy to whom she opened it.

Isobel signed her name in the book presented her, and then eagerly tore open the dispatch.

“Listen, Marie,” she said presently. “Philip well and safe at home. He has found his relations. Be ready to start for Milwaukee to-morrow morning. You are to be *home* for Christmas. Philip very happy.

“JOHN DUNNE.”

“What—what does it mean, Isobel?”

“I don’t know, my dear. But one thing is sure: we have received good news. Philip is happy, and we are going home, my dear, we are going home, we are going home!”

And Isobel sobbed.

"Now, Marie, let us finish our beads," she said after she had recovered herself. "And we shall finish them to thank God for His mercies, His mercies that endure forever."

Rarely did two pure young hearts rise so high on the wings of prayer as did the hearts of Isobel and Marie on that December night so gloomy, so sad but an hour ago, but now glorious with hope.

Shortly after their prayers, another footstep, heavier this time, was followed by another knock without.

"Come in," said Isobel.

A gentleman entered.

"Excuse me," he said, "but is this Miss Isobel Lachance?"

"Yes, sir."

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am Mr. James Leroy, an intimate friend of Mr. Dunne, of Milwaukee. He has just wired me to act as his agent in seeing to your being provided with everything you need for your trip to Milwaukee."

"How kind of him!"

"I hope you will excuse my intruding on you at so unseasonable an hour: but I thought I should come at once to tell you that to-morrow morning I will call for you with a carriage and tickets and sleeper and--and -- is there anything you could wish?"

"No, thank you, sir. It is very good of you to take so much trouble for us."

"Oh, not at all. Mr. Dunne's friends are mine. And

what I do for you will be a pleasure. Now, be sure to be ready in the morning. Mr. Dunne says that money is no object—have—have you everything you need?”

“Thank you : yes, sir.”

“Well, good-night. You will reach Milwaukee on the afternoon of December the twenty-fourth.”

Isobel had a beautiful dream that night. Angels were flying through a sky sown with stars, and as they flew she heard them singing : “You are going home, going home, going home.”

When she awoke she was smiling, but there was a tear upon her eyelash.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH THERE IS A JOYFUL HOMECOMING, AND MR. HAMMOND, OBEYING HIS GRANDCHILD, ARISES AND GOES TO HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

IT was the afternoon of Christmas eve, when the train which bore Isobel and Marie and Charlie steamed into the Milwaukee depot.

"O Isobel," screamed Marie, "I see Philip! There he is—don't you see him? He's there, near the gate."

Isobel, following these directions, perceived Master Philip. He was standing, the center of a goodly crowd. Even as she looked, he caught her eye, and she could see his mouth open, though she could not hear the musical yell of great joy that burst therefrom. Forthwith, every one in that crowd, apparently, began to wave handkerchiefs.

How well little Philip looked! His smug little face blossomed like a red, red rose from out the wraps of every kind which enswathed him. There were many faces in that crowd strange to Isobel's shining eyes. But among them, there were not a few that she recognized with a swelling heart. Jennie was there—Jennie her cousin, though Isobel knew it not. Beside her were Sophie and Edna, rosy and smiling. Other girls were there, too, girls of the Holy Angels' Academy; and standing behind them—Isobel's heart leaped for joy as she looked—were Sisters Agnes and Cecilia, the latter waving her handkerchief as enthusiastically as the youngest of her charges.

"And look at my friends, will you?" piped Charlie. "There's Walter and Paul and Leo and Tony, and they look so glad." As the passengers were now going out, the three took their places in the slow procession.

"Isn't this Isobel Lachance?" asked a gentleman as Isobel alighted.

"Yes, sir."

"Welcome home. Welcome to Milwaukee. I am Philip's friend, John Dunne," he said, shaking her hand cordially; "and this," he added, pointing to an old gentleman standing beside him, "is Mr. Hammond. He is your mother's father, Isobel."

"Welcome, welcome, my dear child. You shall have the place that your poor, dear mother should have had in my heart."

"I don't know what to say," whispered Isobel; "it is all so strange and so beautiful. May I call you grandfather?"

Mr. Hammond, as he pressed her to his bosom, answered:

"Indeed, you must call me nothing else."

"And here," said Mr. Dunne, who had meanwhile been paying his addresses to the two children, "are Marie and Charlie. Did you ever see two lovelier little grandchildren?"

"It is too much: I have not deserved all this." Mr. Hammond, having kissed Marie, took the little boy in his arms.

"Now, Isobel," continued Mr. Dunne, whose mustache had been much abused since the night of the lecture,

“there’s a crowd of your friends and relations waiting for you; and if we delay a minute longer Philip will have a fit.”

Quickly they turned their steps toward the gate — quickly they passed through it, and then the scene that ensued is beyond description. Such handshakings, such laughter, such tears — happy tears they were — such cries and screams of joy, such surprises of recognition, such discoveries, such affection, such welcome — there was never anything like it in the history of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Station.

If on ordinary occasions, Walter looked like a glorified pussy cat, what could be said of him now? His face was a perfect hurricane of smiles, and he expressed his feelings by pounding his two particular friends, Paul and Leo, with an unsparing hand, to which they responded with no less vigorous kicks and digs of joy.

In the midst of this demonstration, Tony, one vast blush, advanced upon Isobel and presented her with a bunch of flowers. It was the most daring thing Tony had ever done, and everyone broke into applause as he disappeared, very hot and filled with a sense of his own extreme awkwardness.

It was a cloudy day; the thermometer was only a few degrees below freezing point, and as Walter happily remarked, it was snowy weather. A few flakes were to be seen when Isobel got off the train; but with each second they came thicker and faster, till now that the happy party emerged from the station, the air was white and heavy with the swirling fall.

“O, but won’t we have a time these holidays!” cried

Walter. "There'll be snow all the time, and we'll have just all the fun we want."

Isobel's heart was full to overflowing when she came face to face again with Sister Mary Agnes.

"O Sister! how glad I am. Your face has haunted me these days, and my heart always sank when I thought I should never see you again. And you here, Sister Cecilia?"

"Yes, dear: and," she added with triumph in her tones, "I've a box of candy for Marie."

Sister Mary Agnes smiled.

"O, it's all very well to laugh," continued Sister Cecilia, "but all healthy girls like candy."

"But where's the dear old Professor? Where's Professor Himmelstein?" asked Isobel, glancing around anxiously.

"That's a fact," cried Philip. "What's become of the Professor?"

"O, there he is," cried Walter, pointing toward the steps leading up to the waiting room.

Yes, there he stood, hat in hand and with bowed head, waiting, it would appear, to receive sentence of death or perpetual exile.

Hardly had he been pointed out, when Charlie and Marie with shouts of joy scampered away madly, and literally threw themselves upon the timid old man.

"Almost bowled him off his pins, didn't they?" observed Tony, sympathetically.

Isobel was after the two with all the speed consistent with the hard and fast lines of dignity required of a young lady of eighteen.



"Charlie and Marie literally threw themselves upon the timid old man."

"Ach Gott! Oh himmel!" ejaculated the Professor as he hugged the two little ones. Suddenly his face ceased to beam, as he saw Isobel approaching.

"So!" he groaned. "O what is to do?"

"Why, Professor, you dear old Professor, how are you? Indeed, indeed, I forgive you from my heart."

"But, Isobel," he faltered, "can you really forgive me?"

"I have forgiven you long ago. And now I remem-

ber only your love and kindness and unselfishness. No, Professor, if there were ten thousand new friends awaiting us here, we could never, never forget our old friend, who stood beside us in our saddest and bitterest hours."

"O, but this is nice! Isobel, you are an angel. And Isobel, when I took away the little Philip I was not myself. I was crazy. I had an opsession. Nothing like it will ever happen again."

"I believe you, Professor: and, indeed, I can't imagine how anything like it could ever happen again. Where are you staying, Professor?"

"I am the guest of Mr. Dunne. And he bosses me much. He says I shall not go away until he haf made a consultation with you."

"Here, Isobel," called out Mr. Hammond, "our sleigh is waiting you; and I have much to tell, my grandchild, that you should know."

Grand Avenue was alive with sleighs. But as our procession passed westward to Twelfth Street from the depot, the racing came to a standstill. Everybody knew Mr. Hammond; everybody knew the strange story of the past, and had heard of the joyous homecoming of his grandchildren. So the sleighs were brought from the fastest to the slowest of movements, and as Isobel sat beside her grandfather with Marie and Phil and Charlie, her heart beat gladly to the glad greeting of men and women, who, though they had never seen her before, welcomed her so cordially and kindly to Milwaukee.

"Welcome home! Welcome home!" cried many a

heartly voice. In answer to which Tony and Walter and Paul and Leo bawled out:

“Merry Christmas!”

“There’s our house, our home,” said Mr. Hammond, as they came in the neighborhood of Twenty-fifth Street and Grand Avenue.

“I never lived in anything near so fine as that, grandfather. Why, it’s one of the finest houses I’ve seen in Milwaukee.”

“I’m glad you like it, dear. There’s a nice room in it looking west and with a southern exposure, for you; and there’s another for Philip and Charlie – as for Marie, she shall have anything she wants.”

Marie cuddled up to the old gentleman. Poor little child! she was simply hungry for love.

As they drove up before the front entrance, an old lady with snowy hair appeared at the door. Her fingers were working convulsively, and she was straining her eyes to catch a glimpse of the newcomers.

“Look, Isobel,” piped Philip, “that’s grandma. O, you’ll just love her. She looks so like mamma. And Mrs. Easton, that’s Aunt Belle, is there standing behind her, and she looks exactly like ma. Run up and hug them, Isobel. Grandma’s been praying and praying that nothing might happen to you on the train.”

For the nonce, Isobel did forget that she was a dignified young lady of eighteen. Leaping from the sleigh, she dashed up the steps and threw her arms around her grandmother’s neck.

“My dear, dear child!” cried the old lady. “Welcome,

welcome." She could say no more. All the tenderness, all the love she had once lavished upon Agnes came back at this moment. She was a mother again, a mother folding to her heart her own child, the child of her fondest love. Agnes had gone away at the age of eighteen, and here, in her place, was Isobel, not unlike her departed mother as Mrs. Lachance had last been seen in Milwaukee.

Several minutes were spent in the exchange of warm greetings. Then, Mr. Hammond, taking Isobel's hand, said :

"Now, Isobel, come with me to your room. I wish to show it to you. Blanche," he added, addressing his wife, "please see that Isobel and myself are not disturbed: I wish to tell her all."

"O what a pretty room!" exclaimed the girl as she entered the chamber destined for herself.

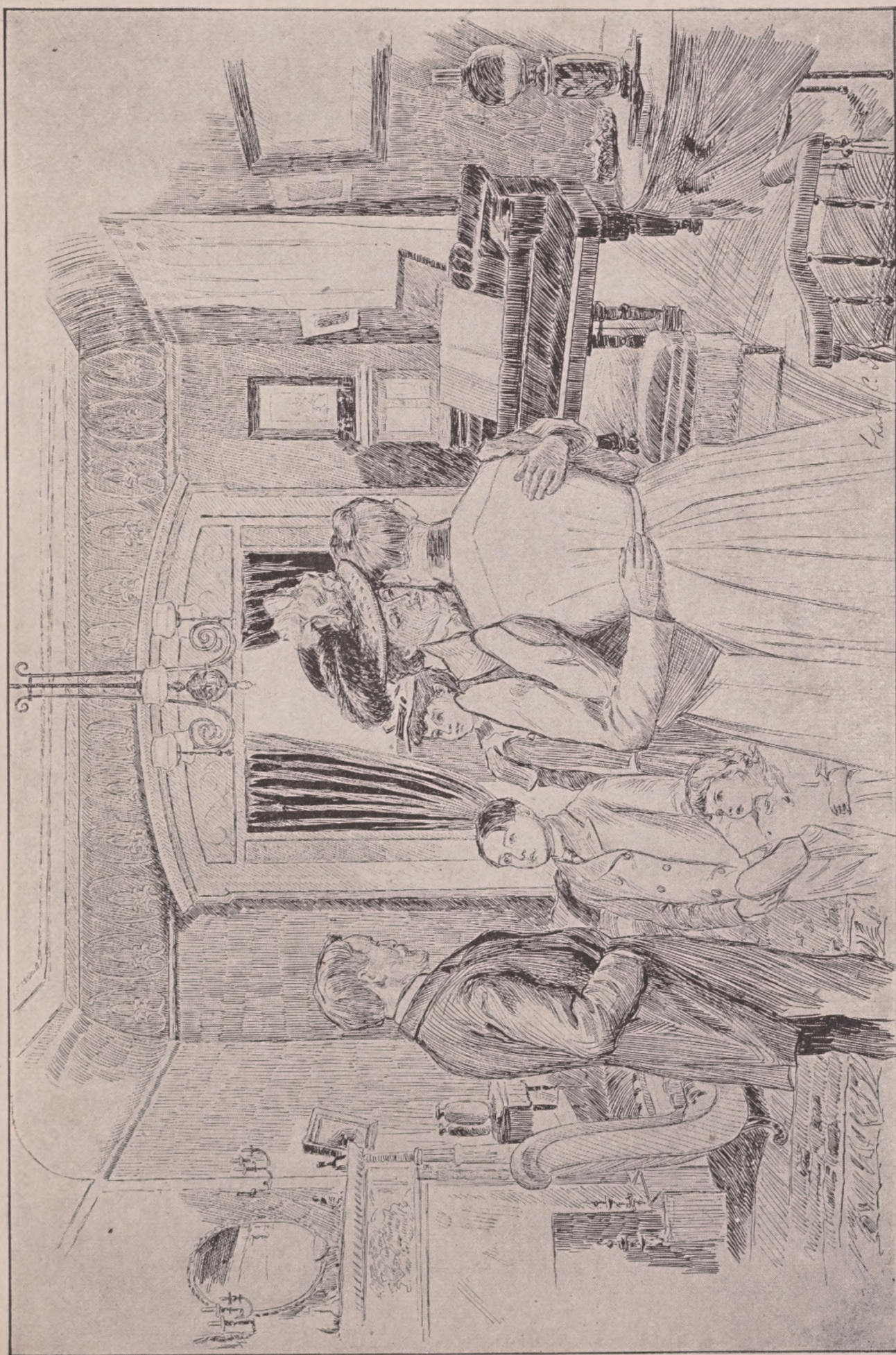
"Isn't it?"

Upon the wall over the bed ivy leaves had been formed into the words "Welcome Home." Holly and laurel were present in profusion. As for the appointments, they were in perfect taste.

"The hands of your cousin Jennie and your friends Sophie and Edna have touched this place lovingly. They have been working and devising day and night since the twenty-second to make it just what it should be for their dear Isobel."

"Who had this room before, grandfather?"

"It was not occupied regularly. We used to call it Jennie's room. She was in the habit of staying over night with us now and then. But Jennie is very, very happy



“Several minutes were spent in the exchange of warm greetings.”

to give it up. In ordinary matters, Jennie thinks that it is better to give than receive. On this occasion she is happy beyond description. I built this house four years ago, Isobel. People couldn't understand why. The only thing that I could say was that I wanted to have a place for my grandchildren. I was thinking, dear, not of you and Philip and Marie, but of Jennie and Walter, and their younger sisters and brothers. Sometimes I used to ask myself whether I had been foolish. You see, Isobel, I did not know that you existed even."

"But, grandfather, how do you explain all this? Beyond the facts which Philip told me concerning his song at the Pabst Theatre, I don't understand."

"Sit down, my dear. There, take your own chair, and I will tell you all. The story is not for your little brothers and sister: they could not understand. I have brought you here to make you understand everything."

Isobel seated herself, and pale with excitement, addressed herself to listen.

"Your mother, my dear grandchild, was the youngest of the family. I'm afraid we all petted her too much: she was treated as the baby. Even when she was fifteen years of age, we always, sisters and brothers and father and mother, we always called her 'Tiny'. We denied her nothing. In fact, we studied her least wish. For a time she actually ruled the house. Agnes had a temperament quite unlike the other members of the family. She was subject to many moods in a single day. Under our training, she developed a nasty temper, and, at times, would be plunged into fits of melancholy which frightened us. De-

spite the remonstrances of the Sisters of Notre Dame, whose academy she attended, we took her from school when she was sixteen, in order that she might devote all her time to music. The sisters granted that she had extraordinary musical gifts; they granted that she should get a special training; but, they insisted Agnes sadly needed the discipline of the school-room. She was a spoiled child, and, unless we were on our guard, the girl was sure to have an unhappy life."

"Poor mother!" sighed Isobel. "The Sisters said true. She had a hard, bitter life."

"My wife and myself both felt that they were right. But Agnes settled our doubts. She said flatly that she would not go back to the Notre Dame Academy; and that settled it, so far as we were concerned.

"So she went her own way, and chose her own professors, and went in and out of the house very much as she pleased. There was only one person in the whole world who seemed to have any influence over her—and that person was John Dunne. He loved her, and she loved and revered him. They became engaged shortly after she left school, and with the engagement the trouble began. Mr. Dunne, very properly, called Agnes to account for a certain touch of Bohemianism in her manner of life. They quarreled, but it ended by the girl's giving in. For some time everything went well. After a year the engagement was made public. The marriage day had been settled on, and to appearances, there was not a cloud on the horizon, when suddenly Agnes changed her manner of dealing with Mr. Dunne. She became self-willed, exacting and cold.

Mr. Dunne felt that he was losing her love; but he could not account for it. Rumors reached him, anonymous rumors, that there was another lover to reckon with. He was too high-minded to give them any heed. One day, however, he met Agnes walking arm in arm with a stranger. He bowed; she flushed. A few hours later, he received a note from her in which she begged to break off an engagement which she had made without sufficient consideration. Then he came to me. It was a bitter hour for both of us. I became very angry, angry for the first time, at my youngest daughter. I had been patient and long-suffering—but a limit had come to everything. I paid no attention to Mr. Dunne's remonstrances, who wanted me to sleep over the matter, but sent at once for Agnes. Mr. Dunne begged to retire, but again I insisted on his staying to witness the scene.

"Agnes entered lightly, carelessly, but when she saw my face, she suddenly grew hard and defiant. Fool that I was! I was too blind to see what was coming.

" 'Agnes,' I said, angrily, 'is this your letter?'

" 'Yes, father.'

" 'Do you mean what you say here?'

" 'Yes, father.'

" 'And who was that man you were seen walking with?'

I cried in a burst of anger.

"She returned anger for anger.

" 'He's the man I'm going to marry,' she answered, hotly.

" 'His name? Did you pick him off the street? If you did, you may go to him on the street.'

“Agnes smiled mockingly : that smile roused me to a fury, of which I never imagined myself capable. And Agnes answered me fury for fury. We were both of us out of our senses. My dear, I can not bring myself to repeat what I said. Mr. Dunne endeavored to stop me, and—and—I struck him, struck the young man whom I loved as though he were my own son. And my poor daughter, whom we had been training all her life for what was coming, my poor daughter vowed that she would never enter the house again, that the name of father and mother should never, never again be pronounced by her lips.”

“Ah !” cried Isobel, her eyes filled with horror.

“She said that rather than utter the name of the man she loved in that house she would cut her tongue out. Isobel, I never knew what an awful monster pride was till I heard your poor mother repeating the lessons we had unconsciously taught her. Angry as I was, I began to see that I had made an awful mistake. But before I could say anything to the purpose, she swept out of the room and up the stairs to her own apartment. As she closed herself in, she said that she would leave the house that night, and that we should never see her, never hear of her again. Of course, I could not bring myself to believe that she would carry out what she had threatened. But when supper time came Agnes did not appear at table. We went to her room. She was gone ; and from that day, though we have employed detective bureaus and made all manner of inquiries, we learned nothing till little Philip jumped from the stage into the arms of his Aunt Belle.”

"Poor mother! She paid dear for leaving home," said Isobel. "And you, my poor grandfather, you must have suffered intensely."

"God alone knows how I have suffered. My pride has helped me to keep up an appearance; but till the night Philip sang, dear, every pleasure of life turned to ashes on my lips. But now, dear, now I know not why, God has been good to me. But what was it brought you to Milwaukee? I asked Philip about it, but could not quite make out what he wanted to say."

Isobel, in answer to this question, told him the story of their life in New York, of her mother's reconciliation with God, of her last command and her death.

"So, grandfather, I came to Milwaukee as a matter of obedience."

"Ah, my dear, it was you, not me, that God rewarded. It is your goodness that has made me and mine so happy."

It was a merry Christmas-eve party that gathered about the board. There was little laughter at supper, and strange as it may appear, not much talk. But there was a great joy in every heart, a joy too deep, too full for the ordinary channels of expression. "Eyes looked love to eyes;" words were inadequate.

"Isobel," said Mr. Hammond presently, "in bidding you welcome home in the name of all present, I desire to state that your grandmother and myself have resolved to make you mistress of this house from now till the close of the Christmas holidays."

Uproarious applause from the small boys.

"Your will," continued the old man, genially, "is law,

and shall be law till January the fourth. During these days, I hope you will contrive to meet and to entertain all our young friends, and, of course, all your new-found relatives. Jennie, Edna and Sophie shall be your lieutenants, and I'm quite sure you will be kept busy enough."

"Thank you, grandfather," said Isobel, as the old gentleman seated himself.

"Have you any plan for this evening? Is there anything you should like to do? Your grandfather is quite at your service," he added.

"It's Christmas eve," said Isobel. "Grandfather, have you been to confession yet?"

"Why, no, child," answered the old man, growing as red as a turkey-cock.

To add to his embarrassment the eyes of every one in the room were turned on him.

"Very well," continued Isobel in the same matter-of-fact tones, "we shall go together now, if you have nothing else to do. Will you be ready by the time I come down with my things?"

"Why, certainly," gasped Mr. Hammond.

She came down presently attired for a walk on the Avenue.

"God bless you, my child," whispered Mrs. Hammond. "Do you know when your grandfather went to confession last?"

"When, grandmother?"

"Not since your poor mother left us twenty years ago."

CHAPTER XXI.

ISOBEL HEARS THE ANGELS CALLING.

THE pew of the Hammonds in the Gesu Church was not large enough to contain the worshipers of that family who attended the four o'clock high Mass. Isobel knelt between her grandfather and grandmother.

When the children's choir sang "Venite adoremus, Venite adoremus Dominum," "Come, let us adore the Lord," she chanced to turn toward her grandfather. His head was bowed in adoration and in gratitude.

Isobel went up with her grandfather to the communion rail. She had to assist him back to his seat. All the faith and the love and the devotion of former years were awakened once more in that aged breast, and the joy and gratitude well-nigh overmastered him.

As they left the church after thanksgiving, they found Professor Himmelstein awaiting them. His face was beaming as the face of a young-eyed cherub.

"Merry Christmas, merry Christmas!" he said, shaking hands violently with each of the party. "Ah, it is wonderful, the ways of God."

"Professor," said Isobel, "you take dinner with us to-day—doesn't he, grandfather?"

"He takes anything you say, Isobel—and welcome."

"Ah, I shall come. And Isobel, I haf great news. The goot organist of this church, Professor Ehlmann, has

asked me as a favor to have Philip sing Noël at Benediction this night. And Mr. Dunne, he want it too. And, Isobel, you will not make objection to me if—”

“Why, of course I’ll not object. All of us shall be delighted to hear our little Philip sing the song which has brought us the happiest Christmas we could imagine.”

“Ah, Isobel, you are an angel. And Isobel, Mr. Dunne, he says that I remain here, and I shall have music work enough, and be near my little friends all the time. O, Isobel, may I, may I still train the angel voice?”

“Why—” Isobel began, but was interrupted by Mr. Hammond.

“One moment, Isobel. Professor, only on one condition may you continue to train the voice of Philip.”

“It shall be. Name it,” cried the old man, making as though he were going to turn a handspring, but wisely checking himself.

“The condition is quite simple, and it’s to oblige me. You have taught Philip these two years without charge. Now that he is my Philip, you must be paid for every lesson.”

“So! It pays itself to hear the voice.”

“Yes: but it pays me to pay you. I would not be content to let the teaching go on otherwise. And Professor, there are a few more of my grandchildren who are to have their voices under your care. In fact, you may count on at least a dozen pupils by the first of January.”

“So! Ah, I will not know want. I will be rich, and I will be near the kinder whom I haf always lofed.”

To attempt describing the joy and happiness of that day would be useless. Isobel could hardly persuade herself that she was not in a dream. But one week before, she was bowed under a burden that promised to endure. But a few days before, she was praying for food, for light—almost praying for death. And now the little ones had a home and loving friends, and she herself was without a single burden.

“Thank God, thank God!” sang her pure heart in the very midst of all the gaiety about her.

How good He has been! Since her mother’s death, God out of the trials and tribulations had led her on in His own wondrous way to friends and home and happiness. She had been obedient, blindly obedient. She had placed herself with so much confidence in God’s arms; and God, who can not be outdone in generosity, had guided her with a certain and unerring hand.

The bitterest trial of these days had been the kidnapping of Philip. It was the wickedest act of the simple old Professor’s life—if, indeed, he was responsible. Yet out of evil God had drawn good.

All these thoughts surged through her brain in a sweet prayer of thanksgiving as she knelt before the Blessed Sacrament at Benediction that Christmas afternoon.

“What return shall I make to the Lord, for all that He hath done unto me?” she murmured, her eyes fixed upon the sacred Host.

Just then Philip’s voice was heard—richer, rarer, sweeter than she had ever heard it:

“O holy night! the stars are brightly shining,
It is the hour of the dear Saviour’s birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared, sweet Babe, upon our earth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,—
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices.
Noël! Noël! O night when Christ was born!
Noël! Noël! O night, O night divine!”

As the song went on, her eyes filled with tears, so that she could see nothing but bright points of flame upon the altar. But her spiritual eyes beheld the grot at Bethlehem. And then, singularly enough, there flashed before her a sweet face, gentle and joyous, a face shining out from an encircling narrow white frill, covered by a long, black veil—the face of Sister Mary Agnes—looking into hers with love and invitation expressed in every lineament.

“Fall on your knees,” she hears Philip singing: “O hear the angels calling.”

But she does not hear the words that follow. The music, indeed, fills her ears; but the words which sound in her heart, filling it with ineffable joy, are “*Veni, sponsa Christi, veni sponsa Christi:*” “Come, thou spouse of Christ! come, thou spouse of Christ!”

And she understands clearly, and does not doubt, for the voice is sweeter than voice of any human singer. She knows it, and loves it—the sweet voice of the Babe of Bethlehem.

[THE END.]

* * * * *

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